

Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone  
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency  
404 Aviation Blvd.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

**IMPORTANT**  
**Sewer service fee NOTICE**  
**(Prop 218) Enclosed:**  
**Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone**

Hearing Date:  
**May 19, 2015**  
**10:00 am**  
Hearing Location:  
**575 Administration Drive,**  
**Room 102A, Santa Rosa, CA**

**Important Customer**  
**Information Inside!**

- ✓ **Proposed Sewer Rates**
- ✓ **Upcoming Public Hearing**
- ✓ **Rate Protest Form**

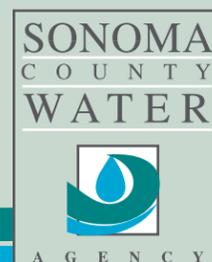
## PROPOSITION 218 NOTICE

Included in this issue is the **Proposition 218 Notice** for the Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone's proposed Fiscal Year 2015-2016 sewer rates. The Notice with information about the proposed rates is included on pages 5-6 of this newsletter. The return protest form is located on page 7.

For more information, visit  
[www.sonomacountywater.org/SRSZ](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/SRSZ).

Securing our Future by Investing in our Water Resources, Environment & Community

[www.sonomacountywater.org/SRSZ](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/SRSZ)



# SEA RANCH SANITATION ZONE

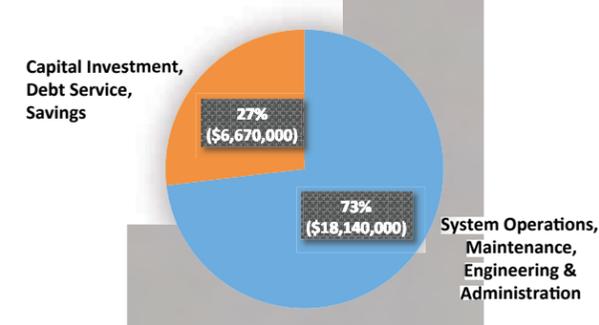
**NEWS**  
SPRING 2015  
Vol. 3, Issue #1

## RATES GO DIRECTLY TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN COMMUNITY'S SANITATION ZONE FACILITIES

There are eight sanitation systems in Sonoma County that are operated by the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency). Fees collected from ratepayers are used to collect wastewater from homes and businesses, turn this wastewater into recycled water, and then release this water back into streams or provide it to others for outdoor irrigation. The recycled water produced by the various treatment plants in this process must meet numerous regulatory requirements aimed at protecting public health, water quality and the environment.

When the Water Agency assumed responsibility for these systems in 1995, the rates being paid by residents were covering only operating costs and funds were not being set aside for long-term replacement of facilities or capital improvements. This resulted in treatment plants and collection systems becoming obsolete or worn out.

### How Sanitation Zone Fees Are Used



The chart shows the percent of ratepayer fees that are spent for sanitation systems on operations and maintenance and capital investment, debt service and savings. The amounts in parentheses are the annual totals for the eight systems operated by the Water Agency.

Since that time, the Water Agency has greatly increased investments in the replacement of equipment and infrastructure by increasing rates, issuing bonds, and obtaining state and federal funding. For example, between 1995 and 2014 more than \$140 million in capital expansion and replacement projects were funded for the systems managed by the Water Agency. In addition,



**INSIDE SPRING 2015**  
**p5 – All About Prop. 218**  
**p7 – Rate Protest Form**

Effluent from the North Treatment Plant at The Sea Ranch is treated to tertiary standards and used to irrigate the Sea Ranch Golf Links.

ongoing preventative maintenance and a strategy to set aside adequate funds to replace infrastructure and equipment have allowed a gradual decrease in the size of rate increases over the past five years.

Sewer rate increases for municipal wastewater systems in Sonoma County over the past 10 years averaged 8% per year. By comparison, annual rate increases have averaged below 6% for the sanitation districts and zones operated by the Water Agency. This has been accomplished while keeping up with operations and maintenance costs and setting money aside for capital replacement funds, which are used to pay for the replacement of equipment and facilities and protect the investment in these community assets.

The strategic goal in setting rates for the sanitation zones and districts is to operate, maintain and replace facilities and equipment in order to preserve the system's assets and protect ratepayers' investments. Ratepayer funds and the wastewater collection and treatment facilities are community assets, and the Water Agency is committed to their long-term protection and safe operation.

Continued on page 2



## HOW YOUR SANITATION ZONE BUDGET WORKS

Since 1995 the Sonoma County Water Agency has been responsible for managing the eight sanitation zones and districts that were formerly managed by the County of Sonoma. The Water Agency strives to operate and maintain these facilities in an environmentally responsible and fiscally prudent manner. As part of its financial duties, the Water Agency each year publishes proposed changes to sewer service fees in accordance with the requirements of Proposition 218.

The fiscal year for the districts and zones, including the Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone (Zone) begins July 1 of each year and runs through June 30 of the following year, so the information in this notice is for the period from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. A five-year capital plan is prepared for the Zone by Water Agency staff based on the need for replacement of aging collection systems and other assets necessary to process the wastewater according to regulatory requirements. Budgets take into account current maintenance and operations costs, any bond or loan repayments, and the necessity to maintain sufficient financial reserves to cover unexpected damage or system failures. Budgets are developed using estimates for these items and for revenues.

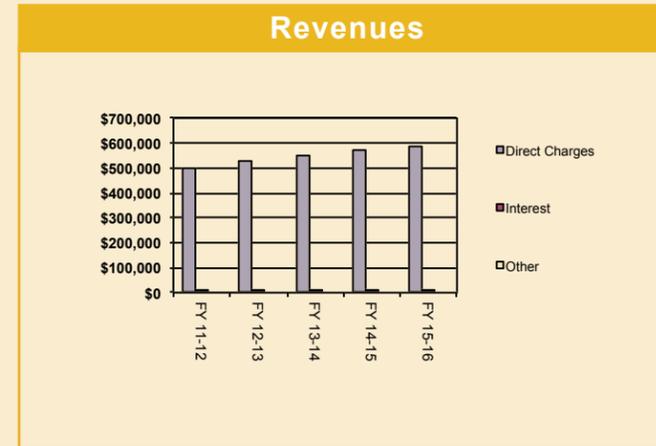
### BUDGET APPROVAL

After Water Agency staff has developed the proposed budgets and rates, the budgets are available for public review at libraries throughout the county and at the Water Agency office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa. Typically, this happens at the end of March each year. In addition, notices of the proposed rates are mailed to the owners of the properties in the Zone at that time. They are also available online. The public can protest rate increases up to the date of the rate hearings, when rate increases are considered, which are typically held in mid-May at the Board of Supervisors chambers. (A protest form and rate hearing information are available on pgs. 5-7 of this notice).

### BUDGET SUMMARY REVENUE

The primary sources of revenues are the fees charged to the Zone ratepayers and collected on property tax bills sent out by the Sonoma County Tax Collectors Office. Additional revenue sources include interest on fund balances and new connection fees. Proceeds from bonds and debt paid through property assessments

may increase the funds available to spend on capital projects but are not counted as Zone revenue. Grants are also a revenue source. Below is a chart showing the Zone revenue for the last four years and the projected revenues for the next fiscal year:



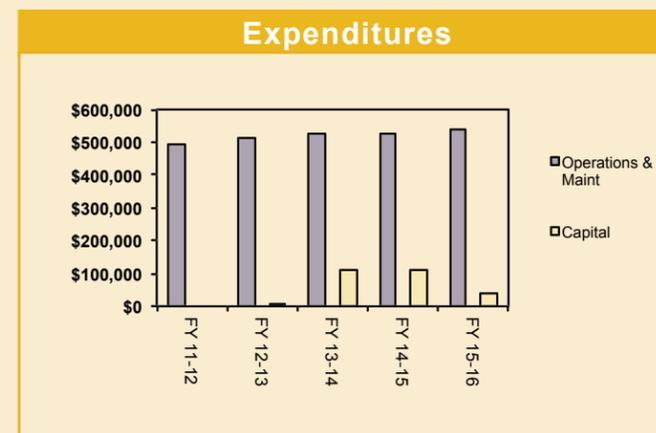
### EXPENDITURES

Your Zone spends money to:

- Operate the wastewater collection and treatment facilities;
- Maintain and repair Zone facilities; and
- Repay bond, other debt and miscellaneous liabilities that may occur as a result of operation.
- Replace aging infrastructure or make capital investments needed to comply with water quality standards.

Your Zone also spends money to accomplish the capital projects needed in the Zone.

The chart below shows expenses for the past four years and next year's budget:



# RATE PROTEST FORM

**NOTE: IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED, ANY PROTEST MUST BE ON THIS FORM**

## WRITTEN PROTEST

I am the parcel owner of the property located at the address on the back of this form. I am submitting this form to protest the proposed sewer rate increase.

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Use opposite side or attach additional sheets if needed.

Signature of Property Owner Required

Print Name

*Fold Here First*

Place Postage Here

Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone  
 c/o Sonoma County Water Agency  
 404 Aviation Blvd.  
 Santa Rosa, CA 95403

*Fold Here Second*

# PROPOSITION 218

## Further Information Available Prior to the Hearing

At the hearing, the Board will consider adoption of an ordinance which will establish the increased fee. A copy of the At the hearing, the Board will consider adoption of an ordinance which will establish the increased fee. A copy of the ordinance is on file and available for review at the Sonoma County Water Agency, 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. In addition, the following persons may be contacted at the Water Agency at (707) 526-5370 for further information and/or obtaining copies of the draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2015-16:

Manuel Olvera, Engineering Technician III  
Candi Bryon, Department Analyst

## Property Owner Protest Procedure

This notice has been mailed to you because records of the Sonoma County Assessor list you as an owner of one or more parcels within the Zone which will be subject to the fee while connected to the system. In the event you have sold property you may have owned within the Zone, please send this notice to the new owner.

Either prior to or at the public hearing, property owners may submit written protests respecting the fee. At the public hearing, the Board will consider all written protests which have been received by the prescribed deadline. In order to be considered, a written protest must be made on the attached form. Only one protest will be counted per parcel. Only protests signed by the current owner(s) will be allowed and must be received no later than the following deadlines:

If submitted by mail, they must be received (NOT postmarked) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 18, 2015, at the mailing address on the form.

If hand delivered, they must be delivered no later than the close of the public hearing on May 19, 2015, to:  
Clerk of the Board  
Board Meeting Room, as set forth in the opening paragraph

**Date of this Notice: March 27, 2015**

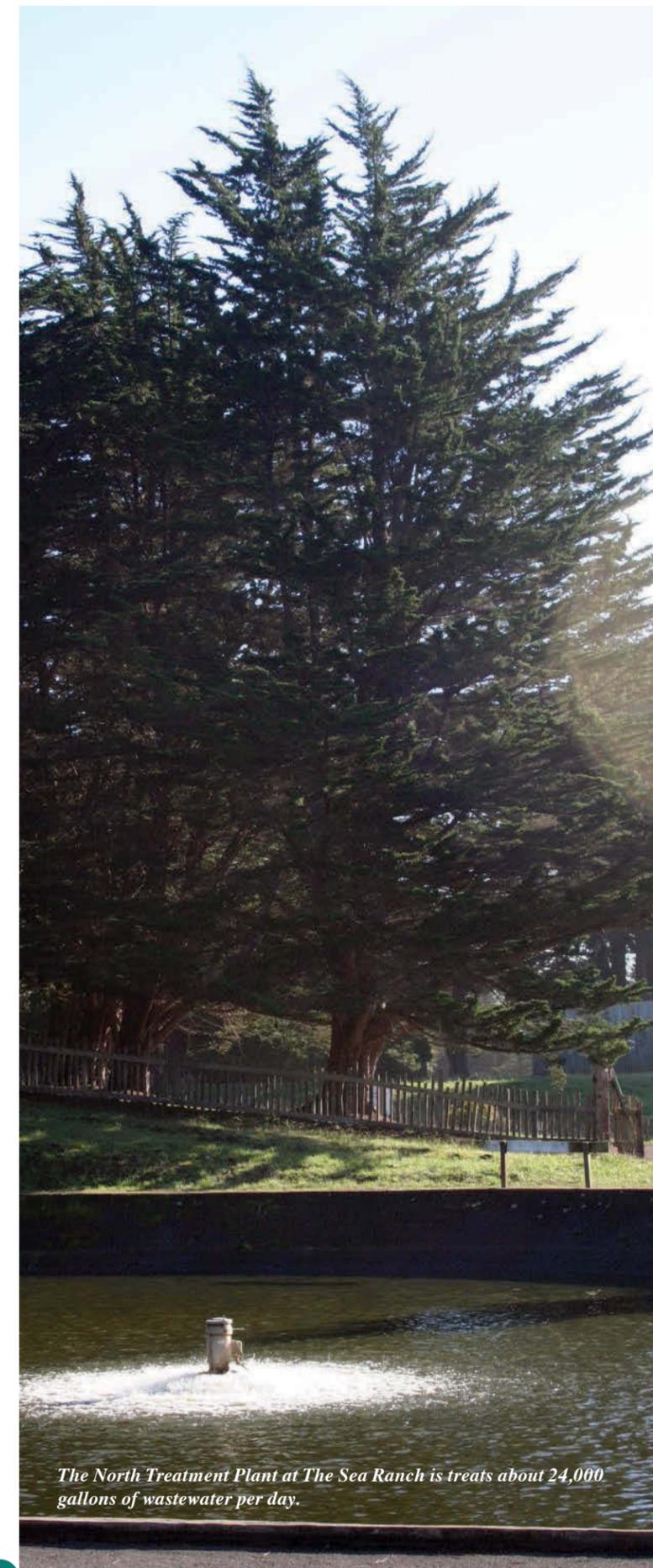
## REBATES

**CLOTHES WASHER REBATE** Receive up to \$125 back on the purchase and installation of a new, qualifying high-efficiency clothes washer (HEW). Rebates are available for all Energy Star Most Efficient listed clothes washers except those containing silver ion technology. A \$75 rebate may also be available from PG&E.

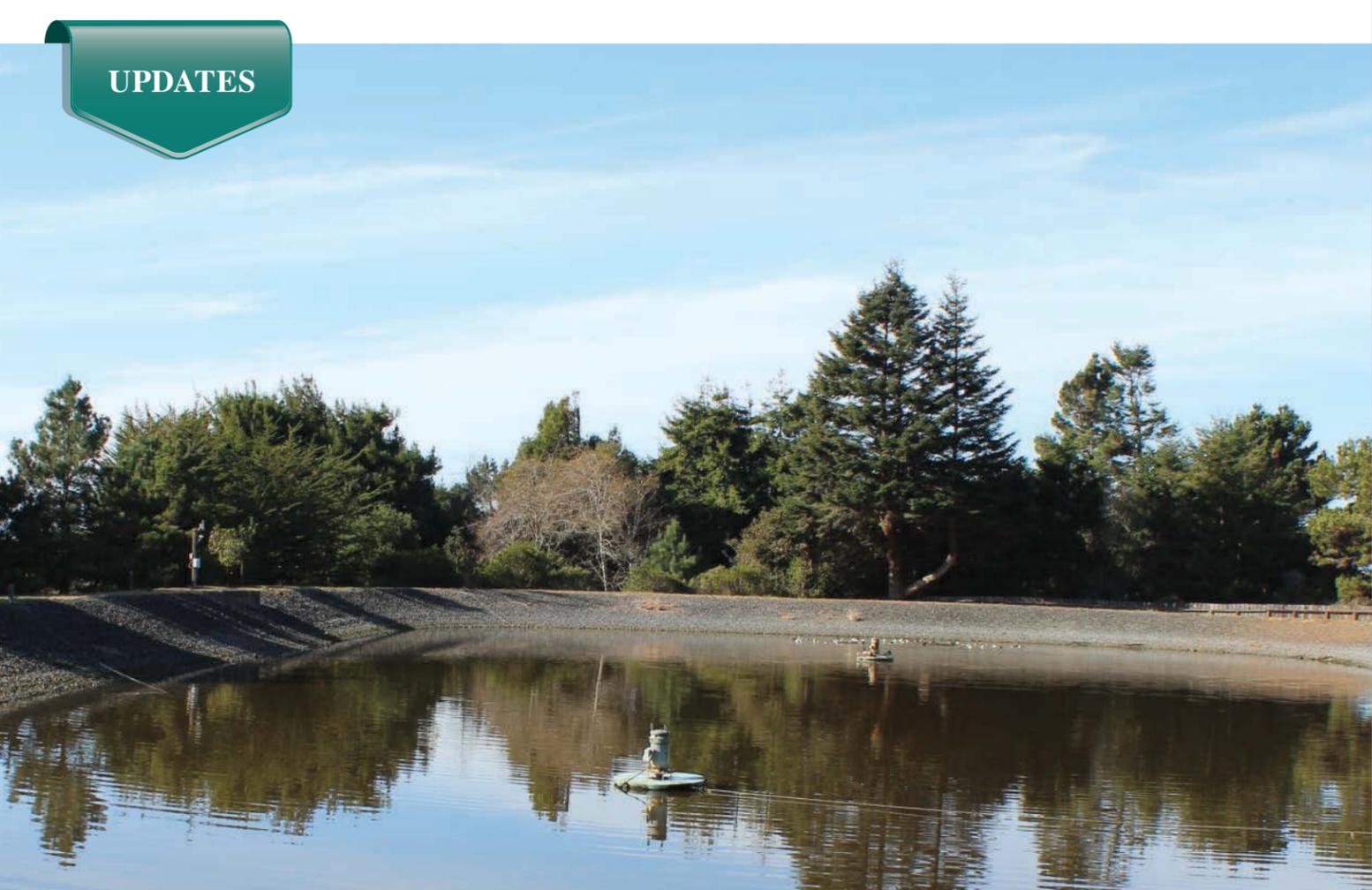
**TOILET REBATE** Get up to \$150 back on the purchase and installation of each new, qualifying high-efficiency toilet (HET) from the List of Qualifying Models.

**HIGH-EFFICIENCY FIXTURE DIRECT INSTALL PROGRAM** A limited number of high-efficiency fixture retrofits, including toilet, urinal, faucet aerator and showerhead replacements, are offered at no cost to eligible properties.

Download rebate application forms and learn more at [www.sonomacountywater.org/sanitation-rebates](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/sanitation-rebates) or call (707) 547-1918.



*The North Treatment Plant at The Sea Ranch is treats about 24,000 gallons of wastewater per day.*



*A proposed revised agreement for operation of the North Treatment Plant would improve the treatment and reuse of wastewater at the Sea Ranch.*

**NEW AGREEMENT IN THE WORKS TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY**

A new agreement is in the works that aims to improve the treatment and reuse of wastewater at The Sea Ranch. The Sea Ranch North Sanitation Zone is the responsibility of the Sonoma County Water Agency, but is operated by the Sea Ranch Water Company. The North Treatment Plant was built in 1972 and currently serves 581 equivalent single-family dwellings (ESD). The plant’s inflow is about 24,000 gallons of wastewater daily.

Under the terms of an existing agreement (known as the Tri-Party Agreement) between the Water Agency, the Gualala Community Services District, and the Sea Ranch Golf Links, effluent from the North Treatment Plant is sent to the Gualala Community Services District where it is treated to tertiary standards and used to irrigate the Sea Ranch Golf Links. The cost to treat the wastewater from secondary to tertiary is paid for by the golf course.

An updated Tri-Party Agreement is under consideration that would further streamline the system and simplify the permitting process for the North Treatment Plant. Under a revised agreement, the North Treatment Plant would effectively become a collection system, and send untreated, raw wastewater to the Gualala Community Services District for treatment. The North Treatment Plant would no longer require a permit to treat the wastewater. The combined raw wastewater flows from Sea Ranch and Gualala would provide the Gualala treatment plant with more optimal flows for its operation.

The Central Plant, which began operation in 1971, is designed to treat average daily dry weather flows of up to 1,700 gallons per day. Treated wastewater is used for irrigation. The Central Plant’s operation is not part of the Tri-Party Agreement.

# PROPOSITION 218

**Sonoma County Water Agency  
Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED SEWER SERVICE FEE INCREASE**

**Date, Time, and Place of Public Hearing**

On May 19, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, in the Board Meeting Room, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, California, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) will conduct a public hearing to consider increasing the annual sewer service fee to be collected on account of sewage collection and treatment services provided by the sewer system of the Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone (Zone) to property within the Zone.

**Property Owner Obligation**

The fee will be imposed on each parcel upon which is located one or more structures which are connected to the system and the fee will be collected on the general property tax bill administered by Sonoma County. Payment of the fee will be the responsibility of the owner of the parcel.

**What the Fee is for and How the Funds Collected Will be Used**

The fee is imposed for two purposes: (a) to finance the ongoing operation and maintenance costs of the system and, (b) to pay the capital replacement program costs of the system. The purpose of the capital replacement program is to provide for the long-term replacement of system facilities as they wear out.

**Amount of Proposed Fee Increase and Method of Calculating the Increased Fee**

Effective July 1, 2015, the Zone proposes to increase the fee to \$1,045 per year per “equivalent single-family dwelling” (ESD), an increase of \$31, or 3.1% versus current year. A standard single-family home constitutes one ESD. Parcels which have other uses (for example, apartments and commercial buildings) will be assigned a number of ESDs using standard equivalency factors which estimate the probable quantity and quality of sewage effluent normally generated by such uses in comparison to a single-family home.

The increased fee has been calculated by dividing the annual costs of providing wastewater treatment and collection service by the estimated number of ESDs to arrive at the fee per ESD of \$1,045, and for parcels having more than one ESD assigned, the fee is calculated by multiplying the number of ESDs assigned to the parcel times \$1,045. The draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2015-16 describes the total annual expenses in detail and is available for review at the Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone, c/o the Sonoma County Water Agency, 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California 95403, and the Sonoma County Regional Libraries in Santa Rosa (Main & Northwest), Windsor, Healdsburg, Cloverdale, Guerneville, Sebastopol, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Rincon Valley, Sonoma, and Forestville (El Molino High School).