SPRING 2013

OCCIDENTAL COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT NEWS

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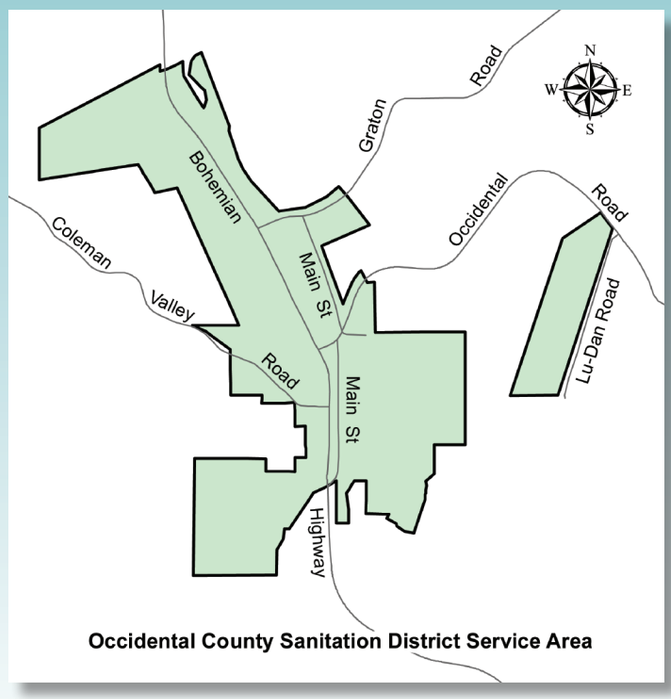
Preliminary environmental fieldwork has started for the Occidental Storage Pond and Recycled Water Project, which received a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
For more information, see page 3.



Occidental County Sanitation District Service Area

About the Sanitation District

During a 1995 restructuring of the Sonoma County government, the Sonoma County Water Agency assumed responsibility for managing and operating eight different sanitation districts and zones, including Occidental County Sanitation District (Sanitation District).

The Sanitation District began operations in 1950. Currently, its service recipients number 264 Equivalent Single-Family Dwellings within a 55-acre service area.

The sanitation facility has a design capacity of 50,000 gallons per day (average daily dry weather flow) and treats wastewater to a secondary treatment level, which meets state and federal regulations.

Between May 15 and September 30, the recycled water is discharged for irrigation on private property. Between October 1 and May 14, recycled water is discharged into Dutch Bill Creek.

The Water Agency's Board of Directors acts as the Sanitation District's Board.

SONOMA COUNTY WATER AGENCY

www.sonomacountywater.org

Welcome to the First Issue of Your Sanitation District's Newsletter

I am pleased to welcome you to the first issue of the Occidental County Sanitation District customer newsletter. The District's Board of Directors advised staff to improve communications with our customers and we hope this newsletter helps in serving that purpose.

This twice-a-year newsletter, to be distributed in the spring and fall of each year, is produced to communicate District budget and rate information, including proposed increases and upcoming public hearings, along with capital improvement projects and water efficiency tips.

Grant Davis, General Manager
Sonoma County Water Agency

Included in this issue is the Proposition 218 Notice for the District's proposed Fiscal Year 2013-2014 sanitation 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. Frequently asked questions about the District's budget process are on pages 3-4.

The District's Board and staff are honored to serve our community by collecting and treating our wastewater and putting it back into use in the most beneficial way possible. Together, we are working to secure our future by investing in our water resources, environment and community.

Meet Your Board

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors/ Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors acts as the Occidental County Sanitation District Board of Directors:

First District Supervisor/Director **Susan Gorin** was elected in November 2012 to a four-year term. Her e-mail address is Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.org.

Second District Supervisor/Director **David Rabbitt** was elected in November 2010 to a four-year term. His e-mail address is David.Rabbitt@sonoma-county.org.

Third District Supervisor/Director **Shirlee Zane** was elected in 2008 to her first four-year term and re-elected to her second four-year term in 2012. Her e-mail address is Shirlee.Zane@sonoma-county.org.

Fourth District Supervisor/Director **Mike McGuire** was elected in 2010 to a four-year term. His e-mail address is mikemcguire@sonoma-county.org.

Fifth District Supervisor/Director **Efren Carrillo** was elected in 2008 to his first four-year term and re-elected to his second four-year term in 2012. His e-mail address is Efren.Carrillo@sonoma-county.org.

Sanitation District directors may also be contacted by phone: (707) 565-2241 and fax: (707) 565-3778.

From left, First District Supervisor/Director Susan Gorin, Fifth District Supervisor/Director Efren Carrillo, Second District Supervisor/Director David Rabbitt, Third District Supervisor/ Director Shirlee Zane and Fourth District Supervisor/Director Mike McGuire.

The Board normally holds its regular meetings on Tuesdays, beginning at 8:30 a.m., in the Board of Supervisors Chambers, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. Access information at www.sonomacountywater.org/board-of-directors.

ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE

Occidental Storage Pond and Recycled Water Project

The preliminary environmental fieldwork for a recycled water storage and irrigation project near Facendini Lane and Graton Road is under way due to a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). A thank you to nearby property owners who granted permission to allow the Occidental County Sanitation District (Sanitation District) to evaluate potential biological, cultural, aesthetic, geological, and hydrological resources related to this project.

The Occidental Storage Pond and Recycled Water Project was developed in conjunction with the Occidental Working Group, a citizens advisory group, who found it consistent with its goals of minimizing ratepayer costs, creating a zero discharge facility and developing beneficial reuse. By converting to a zero discharge facility, the Sanitation District will save significant long-term costs related to operational permitting as well as contribute to the long-term health of Dutch Bill Creek. The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board also expressed its initial support for this plan.

For more information, visit www.sonomacountywater.org/OSPRWPA

Water Efficiency Rebates Available

Details about the Sonoma County Sanitation Water Efficiency Rebate Program are at www.sonomacountywater.org/sanitation-rebates.

Water Agency Educational Tours

Water Supply System

If you are curious about the facilities that pump and clean the water that's delivered by the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) to more than 600,000 residents in portions of Sonoma and Marin counties, sign up to take a free public tour of the Russian River water supply system.

Carbon Free Water by 2015

Tour participants will get to see a subset of energy and sustainability projects the Water Agency has developed in an effort to deliver carbon-free water by 2015. This tour is Thursday, April 11, from 5-6:30 p.m. at 404 Aviation Blvd., Santa Rosa.

Registration Information — Visit www.sonomacountywater.org/tours and fill out the online registration form. For more information, contact Ryan Pedrotti at 707-521-6209 or ryanp@scwa.ca.gov.

Understanding Your District Budget & Fees

The Budget Process

The fiscal year of the sanitation districts and zones starts on July 1st of each year and runs through June 30th of the following year. Thus the following information concerns the period July 1, 2013, through June 30, 2014. The budgets are prepared approximately six months in advance of the period they cover so that there is ample opportunity for public input and to allow the required review and approval process to take place.

Public input is a continuous process and can occur at any time during the year. Specific maintenance and construction projects and priorities are regularly reviewed and revised by staff. Many of these projects have their own environmental and construction approval process, which includes public input.

A five-year capital plan is prepared for the district or zone by the staff based on the need for replacement of aging collection systems and other assets necessary to process the wastewater according to regulatory requirements.

Priorities for projects are assigned taking public input, maintenance data and assessment of the current condition of the facilities into account. The funds available for capital improvements and replacement are then planned for in such a way as to level the expenditures from year to year and thus to reduce the impact that sharp increases in rates would have on the ratepayers.

Budgets also take into account current maintenance and operations costs, any bond or loan repayments, and the need to maintain sufficient financial reserves to cover unexpected damage or system failures. Budgets are developed using estimates for both these items and for revenues. Because of the uneven timing of the revenues paid to the district and because actual costs rarely turn out exactly equal to our estimates, fund balances or retained earnings are kept at all times. These fund balances typically amount to three to six months of operating expenses.

Continued on page 4

Budget Approval

Once staff has developed the proposed budgets and rates, the budgets are sent to libraries around the county and are available for public review at those locations and at the Sonoma County Water Agency. This typically happens at the end of March each year. Notices of the proposed rate are also sent to the owners of all the properties in the district at that time. The public can protest rate increases up to the date of the rate hearings, which are typically held in mid-May at the Board of Supervisors chambers.

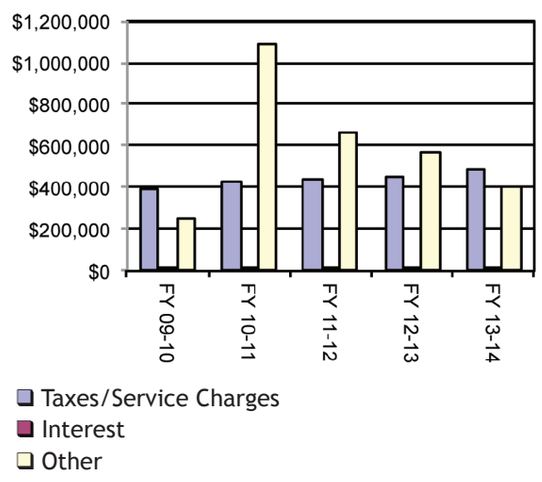
Budget Summary

Where the Money Comes From

The primary source of revenues are the fees charged to district rate payers and collected on the property tax bills sent out by the County Assessor. Other sources of revenue include interest on fund balances and fees charged for new connections. Proceeds from bonds and debt paid through property assessments may increase the funds available to spend on capital projects but are not counted as revenue to the district.

Figure 1 is a chart showing the district's revenue for the last four years and the proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

Figure 1



Glossary

Capital Project – A project that replaces or adds assets valued at more than $25,000.

Operations – Those activities that provide direct service to system users or to support direct service.

Maintenance – Those activities that work to keep current equipment, facilities and infrastructure operational.

ESD – Equivalent Single Family Dwelling (Commercial and multi-residential properties are charged the flat rate times the number of ESDs).

Where the Money Goes

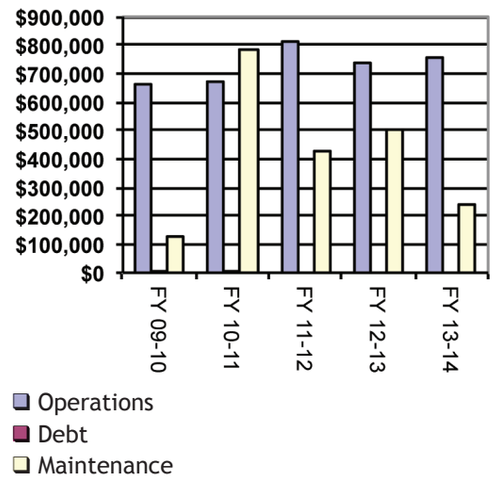
The district spends money to:

- Operate the wastewater collection and treatment facilities,
- Maintain and repair district facilities, and
- Repay bond, other debt and miscellaneous liabilities that may occur as a result of operation.

The district also spends money to accomplish the capital projects needed in the district.

Figure 2 shows the trends in the expense levels over the last four years and next year's budget.

Figure 2



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why do my rates seem to increase every year?

A: We try to manage the system to minimize rate increases while ensuring the infrastructure will be in place to handle present and future needs. The costs of operating the treatment plant and collection system as well as paying for repairs, maintenance and replacement of worn out infrastructure must be paid by the users of the system.

Q: Why do I pay the same as my neighbor with four children even though I live alone?

A: We do not have a cost effective method of measuring usage since we do not deliver your water to you and the cost of installing meters on the sewer system is prohibitive. We also do not have the staffing to track the number of people per household, which can change frequently. This leads to the need for a flat billing method per ESD (used by 84% of similar entities in California), which is also easy and inexpensive to administer.

PROPOSITION 218

Sonoma County Water Agency
Occidental County Sanitation District

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED SEWER SERVICE FEE INCREASE

Date, Time, and Place of Public Hearing

On May 21, 2013, 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 Occidental County Sanitation District (District) 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 District to property within the District.

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, 2013, the District proposes to increase the fee to $1,783 per year per "equivalent single-family dwelling" (ESD), an increase of $101, or 6.0% 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 $1,783, and for parcels having more than one ESD assigned, the fee is calculated by multiplying the number of ESDs assigned to the parcel times $1,783. The draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2013-14 describes the total annual expenses in detail and is available for review at the Occidental County Sanitation District, 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).

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. 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 2013-14: 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 District 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 District, 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 20, 2013, 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 21, 2013, to: Clerk of the Board
  Board Meeting Room, as set forth in the opening paragraph

Date of this Notice: April 1, 2013

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

Occidental County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa CA 95403

Fold Here Second

Occidental County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa CA 95403

PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
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PERMIT NO. 64

IMPORTANT Prop 218 Notice Enclosed: Occidental County Sanitation District

Hearing Date: May 21, 2013, 10:00 a.m.
Hearing Location: 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, CA

Proposition 218 Notice

Included in this issue is the **Proposition 218 Notice** for the Occidental County Sanitation District's proposed Fiscal Year 2013-2014 sanitation 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. Frequently asked questions about the District's budget process is on pages 3-4.

For more information, visit www.sonomacountywater.org/occidental.

Important Customer Information Inside!

- ✔ Proposed Rates
- ✔ Upcoming Public Hearing
- ✔ Rate Protest Form

SONOMA COUNTY WATER AGENCY

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

www.sonomacountywater.org