

## M E M O

TO: Board of Directors  
FROM: District Manager  
PREPARED BY: Environmental Planner  
SUBJECT: Environmental Department Status Report  
DATE: December 03, 2020

### RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Directors review and file the Environmental Department status report.

### SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY PLANNING (ONGOING)

The District is working on a multi-tier effort to optimize operations, sustainably manage water supply and diversify the District's water supply portfolio to ensure a resilient water supply as we adapt to a changing climate through the following efforts (details on each effort within staff report below):

- Water Conservation
- Improving System Efficiencies through Conjunctive Use (Using surface water when available to rest and recharge groundwater sources)
- Capital Improvement (increasing pipeline sizes, reducing leaks, and increasing storage tank capacities)
- Permit Intertie Pipelines to optimize operations and sustainably manage water supply.
- Sustainable Groundwater Management (SMGWA.ORG)
- Climate Adaptation and Mitigation (The Climate Registry)

### CONJUNCTIVE USE GRANT

- Fisheries assessment complete - available on website [here](#).
- Public engagement Workshop with Mike Podlech (aquatic ecologist) on the fisheries assessment was completed at the June 2020 Environmental Committee meeting.
- Water right changes; working with legal. Memo to be provided outlining the associated water rights and their interpretations.
- Meetings with resource agencies to be scheduled in early 2021.
- CEQA Request for Proposals closed in November 2020. County and District staff have recommended the consultant to move forward with. Pending Board of Directors approval on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021.

- The complete Conjunctive Use Plan is 90% finished and should be available for public review by Spring 2021.

## URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN (UWMP)

The UWMP is a public planning document required of urban water suppliers every five years to ensure that adequate water supplies are available to meet existing and future water demands.

The Board of Directors approved the District Manager to execute a joint contract with Water Systems Consulting (WSC) in November 2020. Staff will begin providing data to WSC after the project's kick-off in December 2020.

## **STREAMFLOW, TEMPERATURE AND RELATED OBSERVATIONS FOR THE SAN LORENZO VALLEY WATER DISTRICT'S SURFACE SOURCES OF COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLY WATER**

### WATER YEAR 2020

BOD approved WY 2020 monitoring of stream flow in water supply streams in June. Staff is working on a water right agreement with the SWRCB for the Lompico Creek water right; using this data.

### BALANCE HYDROLOGICS DATA

Monitoring has supported the Fall Creek fish ladder project, conjunctive use studies and various agency compliance in WY2019. Staff is internally reviewing the water year 2018 & 2019 data reports. Once finalized these reports will be available for the public. If recommended a public work shop can be held to discuss these data.

During the CZU Lightning Complex fires a majority of Balance Hydrologics gauges were lost and will need to be reinstalled. Discussion of Balance Hydrologics monitoring turbidity occurred in November. Due to predicted winter debris flows gauging will resume in Spring 2021.

## **SANTA MARGARITA SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AGENCY (SMGWA.ORG)**

Montgomery and Associates the Technical Consultant has been working on the following:

- Correct the deficiencies identified in the hydrologic model.
- Assist with the technical writing of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan.
- Explore the concept of Management Areas.
- Determine Sustainability Criteria.

Agency staff is working on reviewing the GSP sec 2: Plan Area and Basin Settings.

Office hours with agency staff are being offered to the BOD

The District will begin to incorporate SMGWA updates on its social media pages, newsletters and BOD agenda packets monthly.

The agency is also hosting a summer youth education program. Find details [here](#).

The next SGMWA Meeting is scheduled for December, 9th at 5:30 PM. For more information <http://smgwa.org/>. Due to the circumstances regarding the ongoing shelter-in-place orders all Agency meetings will be held in an exclusively remote-access format until further notice.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE - CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

### **SANDHILLS HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FOR THE SAN LORENZO VALLEY WATER DISTRICT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

District is preparing a Habitat Conservation Plan to mitigate the impacts to listed species in sandhills habitat which result from the District's Capital Improvement Projects. This approach will greatly reduce the timeline and cost for project permitting compared to preparing individual HCPs for each project or site. Draft will be completed in December 2020. Staff & Jodi McGraw had call to discuss HCP process on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The draft version of the plan is aimed for completion in December 2020.

The Olympia Conservation Area Management Plan was completed by May 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 and is available for public review as of July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Staff has reviewed and provided feedback. Jodi McGraw presented the plan to the Environmental Committee in July. USFW has reviewed and worked with staff on final revisions. Revisions have been completed and the final plan is now available on the District's website for public review.

The District is also working with consulting ecologist Jodi McGraw to potentially pursue funding through PG&E's mitigation credit program. Once an approach is established a presentation will be conducted for the Environmental Committee and then brought to the Board for approval.

### **CIP PROJECT PERMITTING**

Staff is working to secure permits for the following Projects:

- Fall Creek Fish Ladder Project (all permits in process - CDFW's agreement received August 2020 - awaiting NMFS determination)
- Lyon Treatment Plant Access Road Slide (FEMA funded)
- Swim Tanks Replacement (Redwood Park Tank) (IS-MND public review complete - document will be brought to BOD in November)
- 5 Pipeline Project (Highway 236/Douglas/Quail Hollow Road) (Quail Hollow IS-MND will be open to public review in December 2020)
- Tank Recoatings
- Felton Acres Tank
- Conjunctive Use
- Harmon Creek Emergency Debris Project
- 5-mile pipeline

## **WATERSHED MANAGEMENT/ STEWARDSHIP**

### **FIRE MANAGEMENT PLANNING ON DISTRICT WATERSHED LANDS**

In August 2020 the San Lorenzo Valley experienced significant fire damage during the CZU Lightning Fire Complex fires. Approximately, 1600 acres along the Ben Lomond Mountain were burned. The Environmental Planner, District staff, the County of Santa Cruz, and Cal Fire are working on erosion control, restoration, and hazard tree removal. The Cal Fire Watershed Emergency Response Team has completed their report and should be available for review in October.

District staff have been evaluating burned areas with emergency construction contractors, registered foresters, erosion control specialist, geologists, Cal Fire, and the County of Santa Cruz.

Since September the District has been working to prioritize debris flow and erosion projects, identify hazard trees, and secure grant funding.

The District will be meeting with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) engineering staff October 21st to tour project areas in preparation for Emergency Watershed Protection Program (WPP) grant funding. If projects qualify 75% of installation/construction costs and 100% of engineering will be covered for all implementation.

Prior to the CZU fires staff was working to prepare a Fire Management Plan through partnership with Panorama Environmental INC. The plan will improve mapping, road access for fire personnel and improve communications with Fire Prevention Agencies. Mapping proved valuable during the fires; help the District prepare for fire moving through the area, giving Cal Fire access to facilities, and Staff is also working to create a post-fire plan to ensure the most efficient recovery of District's water resources following the CZU fire event.

Contract with Panorama awarded in March 2020.

Panorama has begun mapping priority infrastructure and lands. Next steps will include securing grants and begin plan preparation.

All data for GIS mapping received by consultant in April 2020. Internal mapping data portal initiated. Panorama & staff have begun to work with local agencies & organizations to secure regional grants. Panorama & staff will be submitting an application for CalFire's CFIP grant program and submit projects for Coastal Regional Prioritization Group (CRPG) Regional Prioritization Plan Survey. CFIP application should be ready for submission by end of July. CFIP application has been submitted and CALFIRE has reviewed. Additional information will be provided to CALFIRE before their funding determination.

Prometheus Fire Consulting (sub-contractor) began site visits on June 9, 2020 starting with the District's most vulnerable poly & redwood tanks. These site visits were completed in July; including vulnerable pipelines.

Site visits with contractors interested in bidding the vegetation removal work will begin in August.

Staff had a call with the Santa Cruz RCD & Calfire to work on District projects to be prioritized with the Coastal Regional Prioritization Group on October 8th.

In October & November site visits were completed with NRCS geologists and the District's consulting foresters. Potential grant funding through NCRS is possible for debris removal work after this winter's storms. The District's foresters completed an initial assessment of hazard trees on District property. This information will be provided to the County along with a Right of Entry permit for hazard tree removal through EPA funding.

## INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT POLICY (IPMP)

First draft of IPMP was reviewed by staff March 2020.

Second draft completed in April 2020. The Environmental committee approved the draft at the May Committee meeting to be brought to the Board of Directors (BOD).

BOD & Public received the draft at the June 4, 2020 BOD and approved the policy.

Staff is working on final edits to release to website and begin implementation.

Internal meeting conducted in November with staff to begin cataloging all pesticides/rodenticides /herbicides used and begin implementation of policy throughout District sites. These meetings have been delayed due to emergency response after the CZU Lightning fires.

In early 2021 the IPMP will be brought to the Environmental Committee for discussion and implementation on all District properties.

## PG&E

PG&E letter was approved at the May 7<sup>th</sup> Special BOD meeting & was sent to the approved contacts by end of May 2020. PG&E has responded to the letter and it was included in June's BOD agenda.

PG&E is interested in mitigation for Sandhill species on District lands. PG&E could potentially provide funding for restoration of District lands. Staff is working with PG&E and Ecologist, Jodi McGraw.

## OLYMPIA PATROL

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County alerted the District of the upper equestrian loop being overgrown at the Olympia property. Operations is working with a consultant to clear the over-growth and maintain the trail.

New fencing and cameras were installed in April 2020 to prevent mountain biking destruction on the Olympia property.

As of August no destruction recorded in patrol reports. No site visits were conducted in September.

Contract is currently expired and work will be completed/billed month to month until new contract is established.

## **WATER CONSERVATION**

### **REBATES**

Funding for the District's rebate Program has been fully committed for fiscal year 2019/2020.

On July 1<sup>st</sup> (new fiscal year) customers are able to apply for the rebate program.

Water Conservation "Conserve to Preserve" signs to be posted in the valley.

Social media postings on water conservation taking place 1-2 times a month.

Due to the CZU Lightning Complex Fires the District will be focusing on conservation messaging to help address reduced storage and limited access to surface water.

### **SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER CONSERVATION COALITION**

Value of water campaign - focus on importance of infrastructure underway. Radio ads planned for June 2020. Outreach materials to be provided.

District staff provide photos and facts on infrastructure for the Value of Water campaign. Website is being updated with provided information.

Updated shared website - [watersavingtips.org](http://watersavingtips.org)

SVWD & SLVWD are completing a groundwater education video for the 2020 Water Harvest Festival (see more details in "Events")

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

### **CHATTERBOX PR**

Chatterbox's role in outreach & communications was increased in August-October due to the CZU Lightning Complex fires and limited available staff hours due to the fire response. Chatterbox is working with staff on daily updates, distributing information to press, social media sites, and print sources. Chatterbox has also been instrumental in coordinating media interviews with staff for news broadcast and articles. Chatterbox also developed a process to involve all stakeholders with informational updates (including

daily media updates), interview schedule, and how to use social media in a crisis guideline.

Since August social media sites have grown as follows:

Facebook went from 1457 to 1947 (post engagement from 8/01 - 10/8 was 29,343 compared to 6/1-7/31 engagement of 1700)

Instagram went from 124 to 195 followers

Twitter went from 22 to 171 followers

All outreach efforts have shifted to fire response. Moving into late October - November regular posting will return.

November Outreach (as of November 25<sup>th</sup>) includes:

Newsletter on debris flows and a customer service update.

Erosion & winter preparedness posts

Emergency notification sign-up information

Committee Member Position Openings

Post-fire Dos/Don'ts

Lompico Tank Project update

SMGWA posts

County Rain Gauge website

Harmon Creek Emergency project

Board of Director meeting summaries

Refill station information

Water|Ways Boulder Creek Museum

Water Conservation

FEMA information

We are hiring posts

October Outreach (as of October 10<sup>th</sup>) includes:

Water donation "thank you" posts

Erosion & winter preparedness posts

Water quality lab results

DND/DNB updates

E-newsletter - fire update

United Way of Santa Cruz County - school supply donations

Volunteer requests

Water conservation messaging

September outreach includes:

Daily updates on operations and fire response

Water Conservation for affected areas

Volunteer & donation opportunities

Redwood Park Tank IS-MND extension notices

DND/DNB notices

Media interviews

Water bottle cases & fill station updates

*Prior to August 2020:*

Chatterbox reviewed the April 2020 customer survey and is working on a FAQ to respond to all comments made by the public. Chatterbox presented its findings and plan to the BOD & public on June 4. The FAQ was released on August 15<sup>th</sup> in the District's newsletter.

A media tour was conducted of three facilities; Bennet Springs, Lewis Tank construction, and Olympia Conservation Area in August. Media contacts were established with staff and sites. Interviews with staff to follow.

Chatterbox is providing social media reports to staff monthly. These reports summarize social media activity, population data, popular posts, post interaction, and audience growth. Staff is working to incorporate this information into memos on either BOD or Committee levels.

Staff & Chatterbox are also working on a COVID update for the District's website.

August outreach (as of August 11) includes:

August E-newsletter

Fire Management update and residential preparedness

Fire response

Media interviews

Rate assistance program social media posts

Redwood Park Tank IS-MND notices on website & in Press Banner

FAQ (website & enewsletter)

District quick facts (website)

Autopay raffle signup

Finance Committee new public members press release

Auto-pay & online billing campaign

Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency Youth Education program social media post

July outreach planned includes:

Lompico Assessment District Annual Report

July E-newsletter

Auto-pay & online billing campaign

Low-income program

Lewis Tank Project Updates

District Public meeting social media posts (on-going)

Leak detection

Water quality - switching to wells post

Lompico Tanks update

June outreach includes:

Creation of District Twitter

Auto-pay signup campaign

Survey Results press release

PG&E PSPS - generators press release

Aerator Donation 'thank you' Social media post



Various social media updates  
Committee meeting summaries  
COVID update video  
BCBA Facebook feature  
PSPS & generator update  
District Public meeting social media posts (on-going)  
Infrastructure project update  
Prepared Not Scared - fire preparation mailer (paid by Fire Safe Council)

May outreach includes:

COVID-19 Updates  
Customer Survey  
Customer Confidence Report  
Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency Update  
System Flushing  
Earth day

April Outreach included:

COVID-19 Updates (including article in Press Banner April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020)  
Bear Creek Slide Construction Update  
Customer Survey  
Customer Confidence Report

March outreach included:

COVID-19 Updates

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

None - due to Shelter in Place Order

### **CLIMATE ADAPTATION**

The District renewed its membership with the Climate Registry

### **NETWORKING & COLLABORATIONS**

SANTA MARGARITA GROUNDWATER AGENCY- <http://smgwa.org/>

Under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014, over-drafted groundwater basins need to be sustainably managed by a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) through the development of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The GSP must be completed by 2022, and the basin must reach sustainability by 2040.

FIRE SAFE COUNCIL OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY <https://www.firesafesantacruz.org/>

Staff represents SLVWD and participates as one of the Directors on the Community Outreach Committee.

District Environmental Planner represents SLVWD on the Board of Directors

## WEED MANAGEMENT AREA OF SANTA CRUZ (WMA)

The Weed Management Area of Santa Cruz (WMA) meets 4 times annually. The group is working on the Strategic Plan, and prioritizing efforts for Santa Cruz County, and working to acquire resources to achieve the goal of fighting invasive species that impact biodiversity.

## SAN LORENZO 2025

San Lorenzo River 2025 is a collaborative effort focused on addressing the risks facing the San Lorenzo River over the next ten years. Through a partnership between local governments, water districts, the Resource Conservation District and local nonprofits, San Lorenzo River 2025 seeks to achieve **reliability** of water, **restoration** of watershed habitats, and a **resilient and safe** community resource. This effort will increase both the pace and the scale of investment into the San Lorenzo Watershed.

## WATER CONSERVATION COALITION

<http://watersavingtips.org/>

The Water Conservation Coalition is a partnership between all the local Water Districts in Santa Cruz County as well as the County Water Resources Division, Ecology Action and other groups who share a passion for water conservation and public education. Our goal is to combine efforts and share resources to provide a common message about water conservation issues to residents throughout Santa Cruz County.

## SANTA CRUZ STEWARDSHIP NETWORK (SCSN)

<http://scmsn.net/>

The Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network is a region-wide and cross-sector collaboration of independent individuals and organizations who are committed to practicing effective stewardship on their own lands and coordinating their efforts with other land stewards to enhance stewardship on a regional level.

Working with network to facilitate fire management grants.

The District's Environmental Planner represents the District.