

West County Water Quality and Recycled Water Supply Feasibility Study

Stakeholder Committee Overview and Decision-Making Structure

October 8, 2024

Background and Purpose

As a result of sewer spills that occurred during 2019 storms, the Russian River County Sanitation District (District) was fined by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. More than 85 percent of the fine (nearly \$890,000) is dedicated to working with community stakeholders to develop feasible, actionable solutions to challenges (including ratepayer costs) facing west Sonoma County wastewater systems.

Sonoma Water created an advisory committee (Committee) of interested stakeholder to better understand community concerns associated with waste management and treatment in western Sonoma County and to help chart the course forward. The end result of Committee discussions is expected to be a feasibility study report (Study) outlining mutually acceptable solutions to wastewater challenges in late 2025.

This document explains the makeup of the Committee, provides a general schedule and decision-making structure for all Committee recommendations or decision points, and District staff commitments to the Committee process.

Member Commitments and Roster

The Committee's membership may shift over time to ensure community members and entities impacted by wastewater management in western Sonoma County have the opportunity to develop action solutions to current and expected future challenges. By joining the Committee, members agree to review all meeting materials and attend meetings. Members are also asked to take information from the Committee to the constituencies or organizations they represent, and report any modifications to recommendations or concerns back to the Committee at its next meeting.

When a member is unable to attend a meeting, they will contact the Committee's facilitator, Sam Magill at s.magill@csus.edu at least five working days before the meeting.

At a minimum, the Committee will be comprised of individuals representing the following interest areas, communities, and organizations:

- Local residents from major communities within the Project area. This membership may be drawn from a range of interests such as local CAGs, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
- District representatives
- Representatives from each of the neighboring community service district/wastewater treatment districts in Graton, Forestville, and Occidental
- Representatives from nearby cities (Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Windsor) who could potentially participate in a regional solution providing reliable tertiary wastewater treatment
- County elected officials or their designee

Other organizations, agencies or interest groups who may wish to participate include:

- Federal and State resources agency representatives (i.e., the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fisheries Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, etc.)
- Representatives from the North Coast Water Quality Control Board
- Local Friends of the River organizations (i.e., Friends of the River, Friends of Fife Creek, etc.)

Schedule

As noted above, the goal of Committee discussions is the development of mutually acceptable solutions to wastewater management challenges in western Sonoma County. The Committee process will run in parallel to a

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of wastewater management and community service district professionals. All information developed by the Committee and TAC will be discussed and refined by each group to ensure both technical feasibility and broad community acceptance of actionable solutions to be outlined in the final Feasibility Study Report in late 2025. The schedule below provides a rough outline of meeting times and topics to meet this ambitious timeline.

Timeline (approx.)	Description	Responsible Group (TAC/Committee)
Q3 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Area Description Workshop 	TAC
Q4 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee Meeting #1: Study Purpose and Initial Discussion of Study Concepts, Planning Area, and Charter 	Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wastewater Regionalization Alternative Review Workshop Shortlisted Alternatives Workshop 	TAC
Q1 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathogen TMDL Compliance: Unsewered Community Ranking and Priority Area Connections Workshop 	TAC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee Meeting #2: Review Initial Regionalization Alternatives and Priority Area Connections Rankings 	Committee
Q2 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycled Water Supply Workshop 	TAC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee Meeting #3: Refine Regionalization Alternatives; Discuss Recycled Water Supply Options Committee Meeting #4: Continued Refinement of Regionalization Alternatives 	Committee
Q3 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess Climate Change Resiliency and Define Recommended Regionalization Alternatives for Feasibility Study Report 	TAC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee Meeting #5: Review and Discuss Recommended Regionalization Alternatives 	Committee
Q4 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee Meeting #6: Review DRAFT Feasibility Study Report Committee Meeting #7: Confirm FINAL Feasibility Study Report 	Committee

Suggested Decision Making Structure

Decisions reflected in documents like the Study are likely to gain more traction with future funding agencies if consensus is reached on alternatives and recommendations. In this case, consensus is defined as “full agreement among all members of a deliberative body such as the Committee.” However, given the rapid timeline for development of Study alternatives and recommendations, District staff acknowledge consensus may not be possible in all discussions. As such, we recommend a model of “consensus with accountability”: while full agreement is always the goal of every Committee discussion, consensus with accountability means that all input will be faithfully reported, and any dissenting/minority opinions will be included in decision documents. Moreover, it requires that any Committee members who may not be able to support a final decision provide an alternative for the Committee’s consideration.

The Committee facilitator will conduct regular straw polls to determine the level of support for any potential decision, giving staff and Committee members the opportunity to revise decision documents before a final poll is conducted. At the end of the process a final poll will be conducted on Study alternatives to assess the final level of support for the Study and document any minority opinions (if applicable).

Staff Commitments

District staff and the Committee's facilitator will thoroughly document all meetings in detailed meeting summaries for consideration by the full Committee within 10 working days of each meeting. At a minimum, the summaries will include:

- Action items and assignments for follow-up
- Decisions made by the Committee, including any minority opinions
- A roster of meeting participants
- A summary of key takeaways from each discussion

Staff will also be responsible for developing all supporting materials, agendas, and meeting notices and distribute to the Committee and general public no less than five working days before each meeting.

Public Accessibility

All meetings (in person or virtual) will be open to the public and given adequate notice (typically at least 2 weeks) to ensure Committee members and members of the general public are able to attend. Committee members will be given the opportunity to respond to all agenda items to provide adequate time for Committee deliberation and discussion; public comment sessions will be included on all agendas at the end of each meeting.

Committee members or members of the public requiring any accommodations including assistive listening or translation services are encourage to contact the Committee facilitator, Sam Magill (s.magill@csus.edu) at least five working days before each meeting.