

Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water)/Russian River County Sanitation District (District)

West County Water Quality and Recycled Water Supply Feasibility Study (Study)

Stakeholder Committee Meeting #2

February 5, 2025

SUMMARY

Meeting Participants:

- Steve Trippe
- Alexis Var Berdmoes
- Chad Davisson (Graton CSD and Forestville CSD)
- Dan Fein
- Gary Helfrich
- Kyla Brooke
- Brenda Adelman
- Tina Low (North Coast RWQCB)
- Nathan Quarles (Permit Sonoma)
- Matt McDermott (Forestville CSD)
- Parastou Hooshialsadat (Sonoma Water)
- Andrea Rodriguez (Sonoma Water)
- Carlos Diaz (Sonoma Water)
- George Lincoln (Sonoma Water)
- Steve Koldis (Sonoma Water)
- Ann DuBay (Sonoma Water)
- Kathryn Geis (Consultant)
- Sam Magill (Consultant)

NOTE: Meeting materials and a recording of the discussion are available online at <https://www.sonomawater.org/westcountystudy>.

Action Items and Assignments

1. Staff will share the Monte Rio/Villa Grande Study and corresponding Monte Rio Community Advisory Group (CAG) report with the Stakeholder Committee when it becomes publicly available.
2. Staff will distribute the Study criteria used for the selection of the short-listed alternatives and a table summarizing the rating applied to each alternative to the Stakeholder Committee.
3. The next Stakeholder Committee meeting is scheduled for May 14th at 4pm.

Welcome and Introductions

Carlos Diaz, Sonoma Water Deputy Director of Engineering, thanked participants for attending and provided opening remarks on behalf of Sonoma Water and the Russian River County Sanitation District (District). After opening remarks, Sam Magill, Sacramento State University College of Continuing Education, reviewed the meeting agenda and led introductions. He explained the purpose of the second meeting was to review initial alternatives for the Study and the qualitative criteria used to refine those alternatives.

Presentation: Study Background, Purpose, and Schedule

Parastou Hooshialsadat, Sonoma Water, provided a brief presentation on the background, purpose, and schedule for the Study. The Study is required under a settlement agreement with the Regional Board from a series of three unauthorized waste discharges to the Russian River by the District in 2019. The settlement agreement includes an ECA designed to:

1. Assess the feasibility and benefits of multiple potential regionalization options

2. Evaluate the potential for regional projects to serve small, rural, and potentially disadvantaged communities
3. Assess the amount of recycled water that could be available for reuse through wastewater and/or recycled water regionalization

As part of the ECA settlement agreement, the District was also asked to convene a stakeholder committee (Committee) to generate community-driven solutions and review alternatives as part of the Study. The final Study will be released in May 2026. After the presentation, the following discussion was recorded; staff responses (if available) are provided as sub-bullets:

- After the final Study is released, will the selected alternative be implemented?
 - The Study will recommend an alternative as a first step in the process; if approved, additional steps include seeking funding, completing permitting, developing engineering design, etc. before implementation begins.
- The District has had multiple unauthorized discharges in its 40 year history. Since 2013, there have been 15 spills. Adding other communities to the aging District treatment system may further exacerbate existing weaknesses. Moreover, funding has not been applied to addressing known weaknesses in the system.

Presentation: Overview of DRAFT Study Regionalization Alternatives

Katheryn Gies, West Yost, provided an overview of initial Study alternatives and the qualitative criteria used to analyze them. Kathryn also provided an overview of the Study schedule. The initial list of alternatives was comprised of:

- 3 “local” scenarios focused on bolstering treatment options within individual community service districts and wastewater providers
- 3 “export” scenarios focused on transporting wastewater through pipelines to Santa Rosa or Windsor
- 2 “combination” scenarios focused on improving some of the local treatment and pipelines to either Santa Rosa or Windsor for the remainder of flow.

Kathryn also presented the qualitative criteria used to narrow the initial list down from 8 to 4 alternatives. The 4 alternatives scoring the highest after a Monte Carlo analysis to apply the criteria include:

- Local scenario 1A: Two separate facilities (District + Monte Rio and Forestville + Graton)
- Local scenario 1C: One regional facility (Forestville + Graton)
- Export scenario 2A: Export all wastewater to Windsor
- Export scenario 2B: Export all wastewater to Santa Rosa

After the presentation, the following discussion was recorded:

- The Monte Rio Study Area was arbitrary and shouldn’t factor into the Study analysis.
 - the Monte Rio Study Area is being considered as its own entity because it is clearly defined. However, the analysis of potential unsewered connections won’t be limited to only this area.
- Do the Study alternatives account for fire resilience?
 - Resilience was one of the criteria used to analyze the alternatives. This included climate resilience and earthquake resilience. The resilience criteria can be extended to consider fire resilience in the next phase of the analysis.
- Current District facilities have a history of failure, are very close to the Russian River, and may have a very high cost for future environmental analysis. Were these factors considered in the alternatives analysis?
 - Yes, these factors were considered with respect to the treatment system.

- The problems listed exist mostly in the current collection system (i.e., lift stations and pipelines) as opposed to the treatment facility itself. The study is only focused on treatment solutions.
- What was the methodology used for the alternatives analysis?
 - A qualitative analysis was completed that considered the criteria presented. A Monte Carlo analysis was used to evaluate whether a criteria weighting would have a significant impact on the selection of the preferred alternatives. The analysis applied a range of weighting approaches to the criteria and the results were plotted to see the range of the overall weighting. .
- Was the economic impact of the alternatives considered in the analysis?
 - No. The next phase that is underway will include an assessment of costs. However, how these costs are translated to rates is not part of this study. Potential costs to individual homeowners will depend on a wide range of factors that are beyond the efforts envisioned here.
- The availability of public funding for the project will be critical for keeping rates at a level that will allow for successful implementation.
- Has the Monte Rio Study and corresponding Community Advisory Group (CAG) report been publicly released?
 - It will be released in Q1 or early Q2 of 2025. Staff will work to circulate the Study and CAG Report to the Stakeholder Committee (**see Action Item #1**).
- Have you looked at the cost to connect for currently unsewered communities, or freshwater supplies for all communities?
 - Evaluating the costs for connecting unsewered communities will occur in a later phase of the work. However, this effort will only define the total overall costs. The costs that would be applied to an individual homeowner is not part of this effort. Additionally, this Study will only focus on wastewater issues.
- Assuming the final alternative crosses existing CSD and wastewater service boundaries, will a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) process be required?
 - Rate studies and the LAFCO process is not included as part of this study and will be an important step to be completed if the project moves forward.

Discussion: Committee Responses to DRAFT Regionalization Alternatives

Sam led the Stakeholder Committee discussion of alternatives based on the following questions:

- What questions do you have about the qualitative criteria?
 - What's missing?
 - What works?
- For the alternatives:
 - What gives you concern?
 - What might be missing?

The following discussion was recorded (note that Committee discussion does not represent a commitment on the part of Sonoma Water or the District to conduct work beyond the scope of the ECA):

- Multiple comments were received regarding the qualitative criteria and methodology used to analyze the alternatives. Specifically, Stakeholder Committee members requested the full list of criteria and a table showing what rating was applied to each alternative for each of the criteria. Understanding these criteria will be important for the Stakeholder Committee to “vote” on their preferred alternative. Staff will provide additional information on the criteria and ratings assigned (**see Action Item #2**).
- The question of cost to connect for unsewered communities is critical. What is the difference between the criteria used to analyze the alternatives for unsewered communities and the next step of a new system's cost and ability to serve those communities?

- The total cost to connect unsewered community clusters in the Study area will be evaluated in the next phase of the study. The ECA does specify some communities such as Hacienda, Villa Grand, and Camp Meeker be considered, but the Study won't be limited to disadvantaged communities.
- Will the Study include a map of all unsewered communities?
 - The Study will look at clusters of unsewered parcels. A Study area map that shows these clusters will be included in the report.
- Participants noted that building community support for the final Study alternative will be critical, and the County must be engaged to create a “sales pitch” for eventual implementation. There is also significant pushback from unsewered communities on the need to connect, particularly if they've already invested in upgraded septic systems. CSD professionals acknowledge the need for improved wastewater/recycled water solutions.
- Presentations for the Stakeholder Committee are focused on the benefits of Study alternatives, but should also outline individual drawbacks/concerns.
- Will a recycled water pipeline to the quarry near Forestville be considered in the analysis?
 - Staff has talked about recycled water needs of one of the quarries (where data is currently available); more analysis is needed to determine whether a pipeline to these potential users is appropriate.

Important note: Stakeholder Committee members were asked to participate in a straw poll to determine their current preferred alternative. They noted that without further information on the criteria and methodology for analysis, they were not able to choose an alternative.

Closing Comments

Carlos thanked participants for attending and provided closing comments. Sam noted the next Stakeholder Committee meeting is scheduled for May 14th at 4pm (**see Action Item #3**)