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SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 410 · SANTA CRUZ, CA · 95060-4073
(831) 454-2160 · FAX (831) 454-2089 · TDD: (831) 454-2123 · WWW.SCCSD.US
MATT MACHADO, DISTRICT ENGINEER

AGENDA DATE: NOVEMBER 5, 2026

Accepted by the Board of Directors, SCCSD on November 5, 2026
ATTEST: _____ Secretary

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT
701 Ocean Street, Room 410
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SUBJECT: HORNBERGER ENGINEERING – 2027 RESIDENTIAL FLOW STUDY

Members of the Board:

On August 1, 2019, the Board of Directors directed that a residential flow study for the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District (District) be prepared every five years. In September 2026, Hornberger Engineering completed the District's Residential Flow Study. This study will be used as a basis for the Revenue Studies prepared in fiscal years 2027/28 through 2031/32.

Currently, sewer service rates are based on the results of the previous residential flow study, which analyzed winter water usage from fiscal years 2018/19 through 2020/21. Winter water usage is the standard used to estimate wastewater discharges since it is the period where irrigation is minimal. The previous study determined that rates should be based on winter water usage of 5.1 hundred cubic feet (HCF) per month for single family customers, 4.1 HCF per month for multiple family, town home, ADU, and condominium customers, and 3.2 HCF per month for mobile homes.

For this current study, winter water usage information was obtained from the City of Santa Cruz and Soquel Creek Water District for the winters of 2023/24 through 2025/26. An analysis of the data indicated that water used by customers in the single family classification decreased from 5.1 to 4.0 HCF per month. Water use by customers in the multiple family, townhome, ADU, and condominium classification decreased from 4.1 to 3.5 HCF per month. Water use by mobile homes decreased from 3.2 to 3.1 HCF per month.

Updating the average wastewater discharge values for all residential classifications will affect the rates charged by the District for all types of customers. Monthly rates are the product of unit costs multiplied by each residential customer's calculated average discharge of wastewater to the system, and each nonresidential customer's monthly water use as reported by their water purveyor. Using the lower average discharge values for residential customers decreases the total discharge to the system, thereby increasing calculated unit costs. Sewer fees are then calculated by multiplying these increased unit costs by the reduced discharge values for residential customers and unchanged discharge values for nonresidential customers, including businesses, restaurants, and schools. As such, although both residential and nonresidential customers are paying the same higher unit cost, nonresidential customers will see a larger relative fee increase.

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If the District were to immediately adopt the updated residential discharge values it would result in a sudden, significant increase in the nonresidential rates that may be a shock for those customers. To mitigate this, a phase-in of the residential discharge values is proposed over the next five years. This would be initiated with the 2027/28 rates and be fully implemented by 2031/32. As detailed in the Residential Flow Study, the single family discharge value would be reduced gradually, starting at 4.9 HCF per month in the first year of 2027/28, trending downward annually to achieve 4.0 HCF per month by the fifth year of 2031/32.

The actual recommended 2027/28 rates will be developed in the next couple of months using the updated flow information and the revenue requirements for the District. Implementation of these adjustments will result in slightly lower fee increases for residential classifications and slightly higher fee increases for nonresidential customers in 2027/28.

It is therefore recommended that the Board of Directors take the following actions:

1. Accept the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District Residential Flow Study by Hornberger Engineering; and

2. Authorize the use of the updated winter water use averages for the basis of future revenue studies.

Yours truly,

DocuSigned by:
Matt Machado
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MATT MACHADO
District Engineer

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Attachments:
A. Residential Flow Study Report by Hornberger Engineering

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2661 Thrasher Lane • San Jose, CA • 95125 • (408) 264-5029

ATTACHMENT A

November 5, 2026

Mr. Matt Machado, P.E.
District Engineer
Santa Cruz County Sanitation
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Subject: Santa Cruz County Sanitation District
Residential Flow Study

Dear Mr. Machado,

We are pleased to submit this study of residential flows for the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District. The purpose of this study is to update the average wastewater discharges assigned to residential customer classifications. It is based on three years of water use information obtained by the District staff from the two agencies that provide service to the District's customers.

These updated averages will be used in the development of the 2027/28 through 2031/32 sewer service charges. The total flow from all residential classifications has decreased significantly from a similar study prepared five years ago. In addition, the pollutant strengths assigned to these classifications should be adjusted to reflect the lower flows. Implementation of these adjustments will result in slightly lower fee increases for those classifications and in higher fee increases for nonresidential customers. A five-year phase-in to the revised flows and pollutant strengths is proposed in order to mitigate the effects on the rates.

We appreciate the opportunity to prepare this study. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Hornberger Engineering

Gary Hornberger

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Santa Cruz County Sanitation District
Residential Flow Study
November 2026

Objective

Monthly sewer service fees for the District's residential customers are based on the average wastewater discharge of each residential classification. Currently single family fees are based on 5.1 hundred cubic feet (HCF) per month. Multiple family, townhome, condominium and ADU fees are based on 4.1 HCF per month. Mobile homes fees are based on 3.2 HCF per month. The average discharges described above were developed for the 2022/23 Revenue Study. The basis for these averages was actual water usage during the three winters of 2018/19-2020/21. Water usage during the four wettest months of the winter is typically used to establish wastewater discharge, as irrigation is minimal.

The objective of this study is to update those averages using current water use information. The updated averages will then be used for the 2027/28 through 2031/32 Revenue Studies.

Methodology

Two agencies supply water to the District's customers. The City of Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities (SCMU) serves the Live Oak area, which is bounded by the city limits on the west and 41st Avenue on the east. The Soquel Creek Water District (SCWD) serves the area bounded by 41st Avenue on the west and by Seascape Boulevard and San Andreas Road on the east.

Both agencies were asked to provide individual water use data during the past three winters, 2023/24 through 2025/26, for all residential customers in the District's service area. The water use requested was for the four months of December through March.

The individual usage information received from the water agencies was further classified and sorted by District staff. This required cross-referencing service addresses used by the water agencies with parcel numbers used by the District. This process resulted in identification of winter water use for approximately 90% of the District's residential customers.

Results

The winter water use averages for District customers served by each water agency are shown in Table 1. Also shown in Table 1 are the weighted total District averages for each classification and a comparison with those developed in the 2022/23 study.

Approximately 38% of the District's single family customers, 46% of combined multiple family customers and 66% of mobile homes are located in the Live Oak area and served by Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities. The average winter water use by single family customers in this area decreased from 4.6 to 4.3 HCF per month since the 2022/23 study. Water use in the combined multiple family classification remained the same at 3.8 HCF per month. The average water use by mobile homes remained the same at 3.2 HCF per month

The remaining 62% of District's single family customers, 54% of combined multiple family customers and 34% of mobile homes are served by the Soquel Creek Water District. The average winter water use by single family customers in this service area decreased significantly from 5.5 to

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3.8 HCF per month. Water use in the combined multiple family classification decreased from 4.2 to 3.3 HCF per month. The average water use by mobile homes also remained at 3.1 HCF per month.

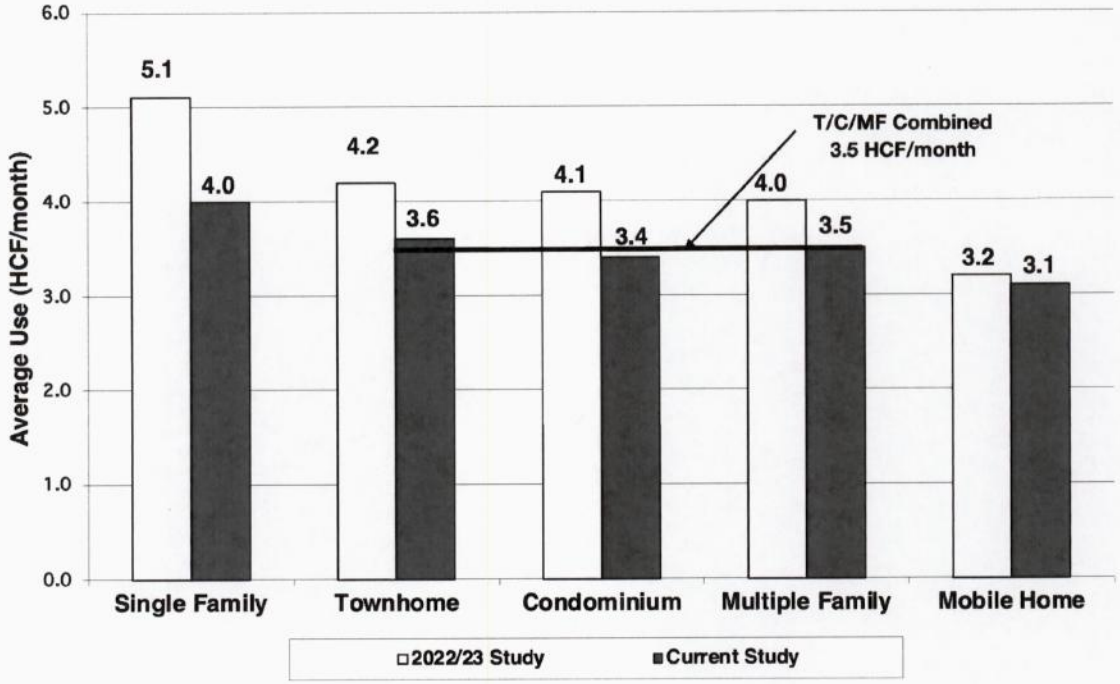
The overall winter water use by customers in the single family classification decreased 21.6%, from 5.1 to 4.0 HCF per month. The use by customers in the combined multiple family classification decreased 14.6%, from 4.1 to 3.5 HCF per month. Mobile home use decreased 3.1%, from 3.2 to 3.1 HCF per month. The overall winter water use for all classifications of the District's customers is illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1
Winter Water Use Averages

Agency	Customer Type	Percentage of Total Customers in SCCSD	Average Monthy Use (HCF/month)	
			Current Study	2022/23 Study
Santa Cruz MU	Single Family	38%	4.3	4.6
	Townhomes		4.1	4.2
	Condominiums		3.7	3.4
	Multiple Family		3.7	3.8
	Townhomes/Condos/MF Combined	46%	3.8	3.8
	Mobile Homes	66%	3.2	3.2
Soquel Creek WD	Single Family	62%	3.8	5.5
	Townhomes		3.3	4.2
	Condominiums		3.4	4.4
	Multiple Family		3.3	4.2
	Townhomes/Condos/MF Combined	54%	3.3	4.2
	Mobile Homes	34%	3.1	3.1
Total SCCSD	Single Family	100%	4.0	5.1
	Townhome		3.6	4.2
	Condominium		3.4	4.1
	Multiple Family		3.5	4.0
	Townhomes/Condos/MF Combined	100%	3.5	4.1
	Mobile Homes	100%	3.1	3.2

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Figure 1
Winter Water Use Averages



Effect of Updated Averages on Fees

Updating the average wastewater discharges for the residential classifications will affect all the fees charged by the District. Monthly fees are the product of unit costs multiplied by each customer's discharge of wastewater to the system. The lower average discharges from residential customers decrease the total discharge to the system, thereby increasing unit costs. These increased unit costs are multiplied by updated discharges for residential customers and unchanged discharges for nonresidential customers, including businesses, restaurants and schools.

Projected fiscal year 2027/28 fees have been calculated using the updated residential discharges. The total revenues received by the District are based on a 7.7% overall rate increase. The net effects of these changes on residential and nonresidential customers are shown in Table 2. Single family fees increase 1.3%. Townhomes, condominiums, multiple family and ADU fees increase 7.8%. Mobile home fees increase 16.9%. Fees for nonresidential customers increase on average by 20.2% as a result of the increased unit costs and no change in discharge.

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Table 2
Projected Fees with Current and Updated Residential Flows
Fiscal Year 2027/28

Classification	2026/27 with Current Averages		2027/28 with Updated Averages		Change in Monthly Charge	
	Monthly Use (HCF/month)	Monthly Charge ($/month)	Monthly Use (HCF/month)	Monthly Charge ($/month)	(%)	($/month)
Single Family	5.1	$103.34	4.0	$104.69	1.3%	$1.35
Townhomes	4.1	$88.98	3.5	$95.94	7.8%	$6.96
Condominiums	4.1	$88.98	3.5	$95.94	7.8%	$6.96
Multiple Family	4.1	$88.98	3.5	$95.94	7.8%	$6.96
Moble Homes	3.2	$76.06	3.1	$88.94	16.9%	$12.88
Small Business	5	$108.27	5	$127.20	17.5%	$18.93
Average Business	12	$202.99	12	$241.42	18.9%	$38.43
Average Restaruant	44	$807.70	44	$1,004.67	24.4%	$196.97
Average Elementary School	53	$1,013.40	53	$1,213	19.7%	$199.39
Junior College	1,256	$16,545.60	1,256	$19,838	19.9%	$3,292
Dominican Hospital	1,526	$21,447.78	1,526	$26,027	21.3%	$4,579
Chaminade	836	$14,835.81	836	$18,650	25.7%	$3,814
Overall Increase					7.7%	

Proposed Phase-In Program for Residential Flows and Strengths

The immediate adoption of the updated residential flows would result in a significant increase in the nonresidential rates, as shown in Table 2. In order to mitigate rate shock to these customers a proposed phase-in of the residential flows is proposed over the next five years. This would be initiated with the 2027/28 rates and be fully implemented by 2031/32. The single family flow would be reduced to 4.9 HCF per month in the first year of 2027/28 and finally to 4.0 HCF per month by the fifth year of 2031/32.

With the reduction in residential flows it is appropriate at the same time to revise the assigned pollutant strengths of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and total suspended solids (TSS). The District's current assigned residential strengths are 200 mg/l for BOD and 250 mg/l for TSS. The City of Santa Cruz rates are based on 300 mg/l for each pollutant. A similar phased-in adjustment is proposed to increase these strengths over the next five years. The effect of this program on the projected 2027/28 rates based in the same 7.7% overall rate increase is shown in Table 4.

Table 3
Phase-In Residential Flows and Strengths

Classification	Monthly Residential Flows					
	Current (HCF/month)	2027/28 (HCF/month)	2028/29 (HCF/month)	2029/30 (HCF/month)	2030/31 (HCF/month)	2031/32 (HCF/month)
Single Family	5.1	4.9	4.7	4.4	4.2	4.0
Townhomes	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.5
Condominiums	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.5
Multiple Family	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.5
Moble Homes	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.1
BOD (mg/l)	200	220	240	260	280	300
TSS (mg/l)	250	260	270	280	290	300

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Table 4
Projected Fees with Current and Phase-In Residential Flows and Strengths
Fiscal Year 2026/27

Classification	2026/27 with Current Averages (1)		2027/28 with Phase-In Revisions (2)		Change in Monthly Charge	
	Monthly Use (HCF/month)	Monthly Charge ($/month)	Monthly Use (HCF/month)	Monthly Charge ($/month)	(%)	($/month)
Single Family	5.1	$103.34	4.9	$110.31	6.7%	$6.97
Townhomes	4.1	$88.98	4.0	$96.00	7.9%	$7.02
Condominiums	4.1	$88.98	4.0	$96.00	7.9%	$7.02
Multiple Family	4.1	$88.98	4.0	$96.00	7.9%	$7.02
Moble Homes	3.2	$76.06	3.2	$83.27	9.5%	$7.21
Small Business	5	$108.27	5	$117.03	8.1%	$8.76
Average Business	12	$202.99	12	$220.23	8.5%	$17.24
Average Restaruant	44	$807.70	44	$894.25	10.7%	$86.55
Average Elementary School	53	$1,013.40	53	$1,100.42	8.6%	$87.03
Junior College	1,256	$16,545.60	1,256	$17,969.15	8.6%	$1,423.55
Dominican Hospital	1,526	$21,447.78	1,526	$23,454.26	9.4%	$2,006.48
Chaminade	836	$14,835.81	836	$16,557.99	11.6%	$1,722.19
Overall Increase					7.7%	

(1) Current Strengths: BOD = 200 mg/l, TSS = 250 mg/l
(2) 2027/28 Strengths: BOD = 220 mg/l, TSS = 260 mg/l

Summary

The analysis of winter water use over the past three years by the District's residential customers indicates that adjustments should be made in the development of sewer service fees, starting in fiscal year 2027/28 and continuing through 2031/32. Average water use by the single family and combined multiple family classifications has declined significantly for all residential classifications. In addition, the pollutant strengths assigned to these users should also be adjusted to reflect higher strengths with reduced flows. Implementation of these adjustments will result in slightly lower fee increases for those classifications and in higher fee increases for nonresidential customers.

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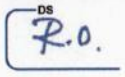
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- Until or unless you notify County of Santa Cruz as described above, you consent to receive exclusively through electronic means all notices, disclosures, authorizations, acknowledgements, and other documents that are required to be provided or made available to you by County of Santa Cruz during the course of your relationship with County of Santa Cruz.