
Scotts Valley Water District Response to Findings and Recommendations

Donna Paul <DPaul@svwd.org>

Wed, Aug 17, 2022 at 11:30 AM

To: "Syda.Cogliati@santacruzcourt.org" <Syda.Cogliati@santacruzcourt.org>,
"grandjury@scgrandjury.org" <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>
Cc: Piret Harmon <PHarmon@svwd.org>, Ruth Stiles <RStiles@svwd.org>

The Honorable Judge Syda Coglia and the Santa Cruz Civil Grand Jury ,

On May 25th the District Board of Directors and General Manager received the Santa Cruz Civil Grand Jury Report: Our Water Account is Overdrawn that included a required response

to the findings and recommendations. On June 9th the Board, discussed the matter and determined that: 1) it would compile one response on behalf of the District that would include the answers to the findings presented to the invited respondent, the General Manager; 2) Board President Ruth Stiles and Vice President Chris Perri would work with staff to prepare a draft response for consideration at its next meeting; and 3) would staff conduct a survey and invited all Board Members to submit individual responses to be used

to prepare the draft response. On August 11th the Board approved and authorized staff to submit the response for the Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury Report: Our Water Account is Overdrawn Beyond Conservation: Achieving Drought Resilience (file attached).

As requested, the response is submitted as a PDF file attachment to this email.

Please direct any questions about the response to Piret Harmon, General Manager at pharmon@svwd.org.

Cordially,

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**The 2021–2022 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury
Requires the
Board of Directors, Scotts Valley Water District
to Respond by August 22, 2022
to the Findings and Recommendations listed below
which were assigned to them in the report titled
Our Water Account Is Overdrawn
Beyond Conservation:
Achieving Drought Resilience**

Responses are **required** from elected officials, elected agency or department heads, and elected boards, councils, and committees which are investigated by the Grand Jury. You are required to respond by the California Penal Code (PC) §933(c).

Your response will be considered **compliant** under PC §933.05 if it contains an appropriate comment on **all** findings and recommendations **which were assigned to you** in this report.

Please follow the instructions below when preparing your response.

Instructions for Respondents

Your assigned Findings and Recommendations are listed on the following pages with check boxes and an expandable space for summaries, timeframes, and explanations. Please follow these instructions, which paraphrase PC §933.05:

1. **For the Findings, mark one of the following responses with an “X” and provide the required additional information:**
 - a. **AGREE with the Finding**, or
 - b. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE with the Finding** – specify the portion of the Finding that is disputed and include an explanation of the reasons why, or
 - c. **DISAGREE with the Finding** – provide an explanation of the reasons why.
2. **For the Recommendations, mark one of the following actions with an “X” and provide the required additional information:**
 - a. **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – provide a summary of the action taken, or
 - b. **HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – provide a timeframe or expected date for completion, or
 - c. **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – provide an explanation, scope, and parameters of an analysis to be completed within six months, or
 - d. **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – provide an explanation of why it is not warranted or not reasonable.
3. **Please confirm the date on which you approved the assigned responses:**

We approved these responses in a regular public meeting as shown in our minutes dated August 11, 2022.

4. **When your responses are complete, please email your completed Response Packet as a PDF file attachment to both**

The Honorable Judge Syda Cogliati Syda.Cogliati@santacruzcourt.org and
The Santa Cruz County Grand Jury grandjury@scgrandjury.org.

If you have questions about this response form, please contact the Grand Jury by calling 831-454-2099 or by sending an email to grandjury@scgrandjury.org.

Findings

- F2.** There is an urgent need to create a county-wide drought-resilient water storage and delivery infrastructure.

AGREE
 PARTIALLY DISAGREE
 DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Although we agree that county-wide collaboration makes a lot of sense, it might be more practicable to focus on planning and implementing regional solutions that eventually can be connected to/into county-wide system.

- F3.** Interdistrict water-sharing plans spanning North County and Mid-County that could benefit all residents have existed since 2015 and deserve to be accelerated.

AGREE
 PARTIALLY DISAGREE
 DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Conjunctive use and other water sharing initiatives that have been investigated benefit the residents that are served by public water agencies. A considerable number of people in the County are served by small systems or private wells and they remain vulnerable to the impacts from changing climate patterns.

- F4.** Establishing a strategic groundwater reserve, as described in documents from the City of Santa Cruz, is a well-understood and achievable first step.

AGREE
 PARTIALLY DISAGREE
 DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Although the City of Santa Cruz has already completed several investigative activities, there are many more studies that will need to be undertaken before it can be concluded which project(s) are the best suited for Santa Margarita basin and offer the highest benefit for all stakeholders.

F6. Limited interdistrict water transfers have been achieved and serve as proof of concept.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

F8. Each agency described in this report communicates well with neighboring agencies, but collaboration is limited and narrow in scope.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

F9. Agency communications to the public emphasize conservation and sustainability while downplaying agency planning to achieve drought resilience.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Scotts Valley Water District along with the other public water agencies has been actively and strategically working on increasing its drought resilience for more than a decade. We try hard communicating the District's strategic goals and workplan to our stakeholders and have used a wide variety of channels for reaching the public: e-Newsletter, social media, booth at Scotts Valley Farmers Market, presentations to the local service groups, at the Senior Life Online Webinar and at the annual Mayor's State of the City.

F10. The individual water supply districts lack funding, resources, and charters to develop county-centric drought-resilience infrastructure.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

F11. The Groundwater Sustainability Management agencies lack the charters, staff, and resources to plan or execute a county-wide drought-resilience strategy.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

F12. There is no county-level agency chartered to plan, propose, or build regional district-spanning drought-resilience infrastructure.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS (invited responses from SVWD General Manager)

- F1.** If extended drought conditions lead the City of Santa Cruz to execute Stage 5 of its Water Shortage Contingency Plan, it will have extreme economic impacts on all residents throughout the County.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Executing Stage 5 of any agency's Water Shortage Contingency Plan will have extreme impacts, economic and social, to the customers of that agency. The impacts to the regions' residents will also be significant but will partially depend on the specific activities implemented by the City of Santa Cruz and their duration.

- F7.** Existing City of Watsonville and City of Santa Cruz wastewater resources are only partially utilized to address passive well resting and saltwater intrusion issues.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Recommendations

- R1.** By December 31, 2022, the Boards of the Santa Margarita Groundwater Management Agency and the Mid-County Groundwater Management Agency should extend their charters to include and proactively deliver drought-resilience project planning and execution.

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – summarize what has been done

HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE – summarize what will be done and the timeframe

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)

X WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency and Mid-County Groundwater Agency have a lot of work to do to fulfill their existing charter. Neither agency has designated staff nor dependable funding sources.

Even if developing the drought resiliency is not explicitly the objective of the groundwater sustainability agencies, most of the projects and management actions included in their Groundwater Sustainability Plans will address the drought resiliency by improving the groundwater basin's storage capacity and implementing regional projects that increase supply diversity.

- R2.** By December 31, 2022, local water districts should jointly publish an integrated drought-resilience action plan that includes essential infrastructure improvements, estimated costs and schedule to complete improvements that will deliver drought resilience to the Mid-County Groundwater Basin, the City of Santa Cruz, and the Santa Margarita Basin by December 31, 2029. Agencies to respond are the San Lorenzo Water District, the Scotts Valley Water District, the City of Santa Cruz Water Department, the Soquel Creek Water District, the Santa Margarita Groundwater Management Agency, and the Mid-County Groundwater Management Agency.

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – summarize what has been done

HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE – summarize what will be done and the timeframe

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)

X WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Local water districts are required to have Urban Water Management Plans (UWMP) and Water Shortage Contingency Plans (WSCP) that include action plans for various water shortage scenarios. Scotts Valley Water District and San Lorenzo Valley Water District developed a joint UWMP/WSCP in 2021, realizing that regional planning and collaboration yields better results for the community.

All local water agencies and water resource management agencies are signatories to the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, which is a collaborative effort to comprehensively manage all aspects of water resources in the region. In 2019, an addendum to the 2014 plan was completed to comply with the State's new standards, one of them an inclusion of Climate Change chapter.

Developing a thorough and useful integrated plan requires extensive political and legal agreements, public education and input, planning documents and much more. The existing framework is sufficient to support continued alignment and collaboration between the public and water management agencies in the County.

- R3.** By December 31, 2022, local water districts should jointly publish an integrated recycled wastewater action plan that specifies the infrastructure improvements, expected costs, and construction schedule that will fully utilize existing wastewater sources by December 31, 2026. Responding agencies are the Scotts Valley Water District, the City of Santa Cruz Water Department, the Soquel Creek Water District, the Central Water District, the Mid-County Groundwater Management Agency, the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency, and the City of Watsonville Water Division.

- X** **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Local water and wastewater agencies have been in discussions on how to better utilize the wastewater resources regionally. There are many factors that need to be considered, studies and investigated before arriving at a solution that will benefit the most stakeholders. The exploration phase for regional projects that cross jurisdictions typically takes years and it is not feasible to develop and publish an action plan in such a short timeline.

Scotts Valley Water District continues to work with the City of Scotts Valley (Public Works), City of Santa Cruz (Water and Public Works) and Soquel Creek Water District to determine the best utilization for the wastewater generated by the residents and businesses in the Mid- and North-County.