



COMMUNITY WATER REPORT

Fall 2022



**SOQUEL CREEK
WATER DISTRICT**

We are a not-for-profit public agency dedicated to providing a safe, high-quality, reliable, and sustainable water supply to meet our community's present and future needs in an environmentally sensitive and economically responsible manner.

GENERAL MANAGER MESSAGE

During our last update of this Community Water Report in Fall 2020, we were nearing the end of the first year of the COVID pandemic. At that time, everyone was figuring out how to continue daily activities within the constraints of the virus. Today, we have all largely managed to adapt and adjust to life with COVID and in some cases even thrive.

“Adapt, adjust, and strive to thrive” is a theme we will use as we transform the District, and re-position to ensure our community has a sustainable and dependable water supply. We are at a pivotal juncture to directly address our currently overdrafted groundwater basin and climate change. Pure Water Soquel will replenish and protect our basin, so our region can have a dependable water supply today and in the future.

To our customers and community—thank you for your support and conservation efforts. We too have worked hard over the last couple of years to update our strategic plan and gain over \$80 million in grant funding to help offset your water costs. Many thanks to our District staff for their flexibility and skill and to our Board of Directors, whose leadership and guidance have allowed us to best serve our community in even the most difficult of times.



Ron Duncan, GM

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Earlier this year, the Board updated its Strategic Plan. The Plan helps us stay on track with the evolving needs of our community and changing circumstances, ensuring we can effectively provide water not just for today but for decades to come. Significant community and staff input helped develop a plan that is meaningful in design and implementation.

The five components of the Strategic Plan—Water Resource Management and Sustainability, Infrastructure and Delivery, Community Engagement and Trust, Fiscal Responsibility and Customer Service, and Workforce and Organizational Excellence—and a sample of work already performed to reach its objectives are presented on the following pages.

“In the face of uncertainties, planning defines the particular place you want to be and how you intend to get there.”

~Peter Drucker



Staff participating in the strategic plan update process.

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

An amazing level of water conservation has been achieved since the District first declared a Stage 3 Water Shortage and Groundwater Emergency in 2014. But we all have a shared understanding that even this remarkable accomplishment will not bring sustainability to the groundwater basin. The District—as it pivots to a groundwater replenishment/water delivery agency—is taking the necessary steps to provide additional water supplies to achieve a sustainable groundwater basin and prevent further seawater intrusion.



Pure Water Soquel

Pure Water Soquel will put recycled water through an advanced water purification process and use it to recharge our critically overdrafted groundwater basin. There, it will blend with the groundwater, raise water levels to act as a barrier to seawater contamination, and supplement our water supply.

All components of the Pure Water Soquel project are under construction. The seawater intrusion prevention wells are drilled and being finalized, the eight miles of pipeline is over 60% complete, and the purification center is rising from the ground.



On December 19, 2021, we broke ground on the Water Purification Center.

Water Purification Center being constructed at the corner of Chanticleer Ave. and Soquel Ave.



Willowbrook Lane seawater intrusion prevention well drilling.



Pipeline construction.





Celebrating after receiving a \$7.6M grant for the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency.
(from left to right) Kevin Crossley (City of Santa Cruz), Sierra Ryan (County of Santa Cruz), State Senator John Laird, Ron Duncan and Melanie Mow Schumacher (Soquel Creek Water District).

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency

The District is part of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA), including Central Water District, City of Santa Cruz, County of Santa Cruz, and private well owners. The MGA oversees the groundwater management activities for the overdrafted Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin, which all of these groups share. This crucial partnership is important to achieving sustainable water supplies throughout the region. The MGA developed a Groundwater Sustainability Plan that was approved in January 2021 by the State. Pure Water Soquel is the leading project of this Plan to bring the basin back into compliance.

Water Transfers

Another five-year extension of the surface water transfer pilot project agreement was executed in 2021 and will run through 2026. We are interested in purchasing surface water from Santa Cruz when they have excess winter water; however, this has been challenging due to water quality compatibility issues and the lack of available water.



The MGA built an additional monitoring well in the Capitola area to obtain a better understanding of seawater intrusion.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND DELIVERY

A foundational goal of the District is to provide and maintain reliable and resilient water infrastructure and ensure the delivery of high-quality, safe water to our customers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



The California Department of Water Resources approved our 2020 Urban Water Management Plan, which discusses how we will achieve a sustainable water supply now and into the future.

District water meters are now upgraded to i-Meters (intelligent-metering technology), making it easier for customers to track water use and receive leak alerts.



We replaced over 10,000 linear feet of water main pipelines on Soquel Drive.

We performed over 13,000 drinking water quality tests.



In 2021, 15 water main pipeline leaks and 90 service pipelines were repaired.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TRUST

Community engagement and maintaining trust between the District and those whom we serve is more important today than ever. The significant challenges we face, such as an overdrafted water supply, seawater contamination, and climate change can only be fully addressed in partnership with the community. It's crucial to connect with our customers in various ways (Board Meetings, events, presentations, education, tours, etc.) to share information about the District's programs, projects, and activities, and to work together.



Re-certified as a transparent organization from the Special District Leadership Foundation, in recognition of our commitment to operating in a transparent and ethical manner.

Staff working hard to serve our customers.



We are committed to educating our youth. During the pandemic we provided virtual assemblies by the Banana Slug String Band.



Conducted over 25 presentations and 40 meetings with various community members and organizations.



Congressman Panetta visiting a seawater intrusion prevention well construction site.



FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Careful planning has kept the District in a sound financial position, despite the ongoing uncertainty of the economy and rising operational and capital project costs. With District ratepayers in mind, we continue to exercise prudent fiscal planning, while focusing on our dual roles of providing reliable water service, and pursuing groundwater replenishment to ensure a sustainable long-term water supply. This fiscal responsibility ties-in with the District's Customer Service program, by providing our customers with the tools to help them achieve the most cost-effective water use possible.

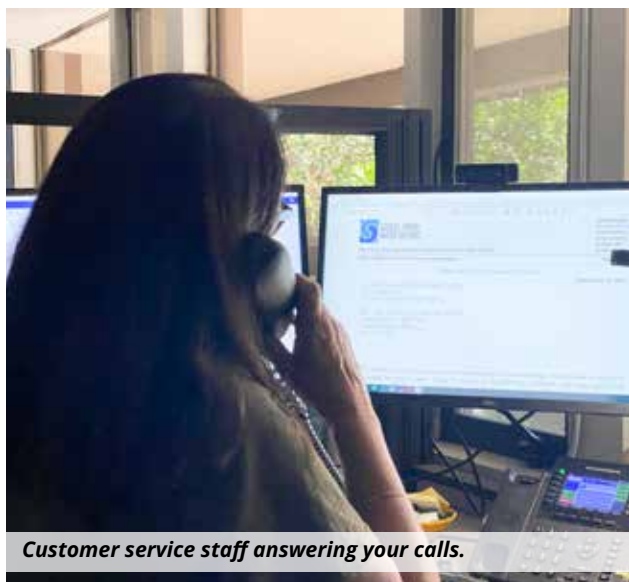
We've been awarded over \$80 million in grant funding.



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION



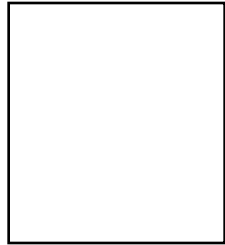
Our new i-Meter system saved 6,500 customers money and water in 2021 with automatic leak alert notifications.



Customer service staff answering your calls.



The District received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, and the Distinguished Budget Presentation award from the Government Finance Officers Association.

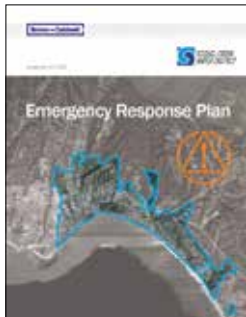


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WORKFORCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

To best serve our customers, the District puts a significant effort into providing resources for staff to pursue education, training, and professional development opportunities—helping us to maintain a reputation for excellence in our respective fields and ensuring we retain the right, highly-skilled people for the challenges and opportunities we face.



Updated our Emergency Response Plan and staff participated in a table top emergency response scenario exercise.



Awarded the 2022 Special District Leadership award.

Pure Water Soquel is one of just 16 worldwide projects featured in 'Beneath the Surface: The Journey of Water' Film Series. Presented by the International Water Association and produced by BBC StoryWorks for us, the series profiles innovations and innovators who are advancing positive change toward water sustainability.

View all the films at www.bbc.com/storyworks/specials/beneath-the-surface/

