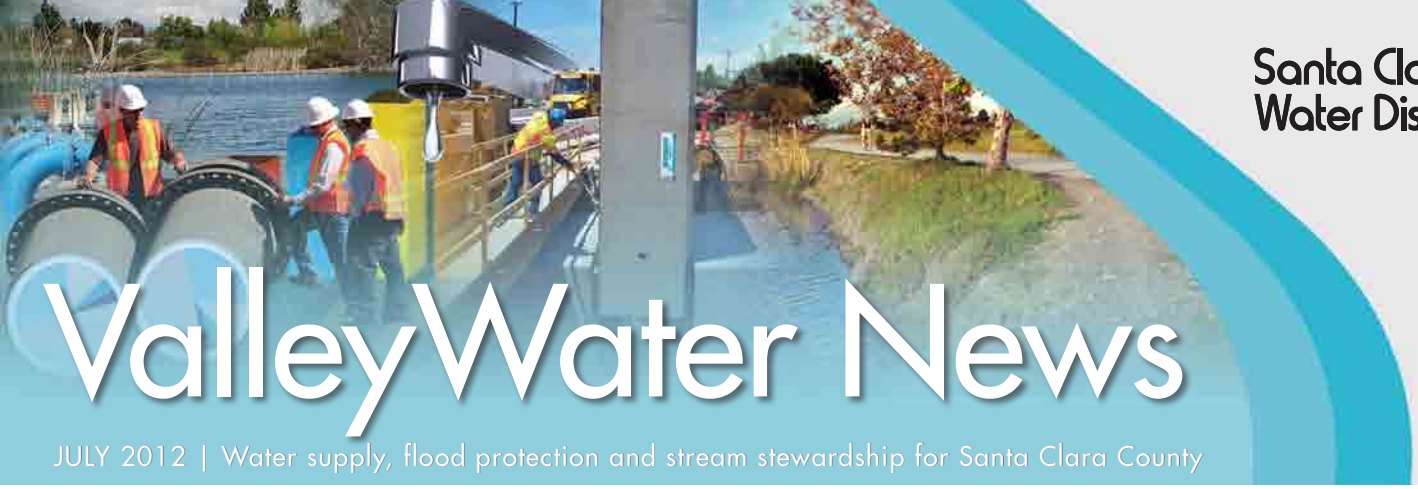

Santa Clara Valley Water District

ValleyWater News

JULY 2012 | Water supply, flood protection and stream stewardship for Santa Clara County

A lean budget focused on core services

The Santa Clara Valley Water District is committed to supplying clean, reliable water, providing flood protection, and protecting and enhancing watersheds in an efficient and effective manner. The Fiscal Year 2013 budget reinforces that commitment.

The budget comprises $220.3 million in net outlays and $64.9 million in capital projects. It focuses on ensuring a clean, reliable water supply; protecting communities from floods; and providing stewardship of the streams. Among the capital projects to be completed in FY 2013 is the multi-million dollar Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center in north San Jose.

The $285.2 million budget is approximately 30 percent less than the $409.6 million budget in FY 2009. It is a culmination of efforts initiated a few years ago to reduce costs, while improving efficiency, effectiveness and optimization throughout the district.

The district has cut 107 positions since 2008. In addition, the district has entered into new contracts with its three bargaining units, saving more than $7.7 million over the three-year agreement period.

FY 2013 budget highlights:

- $27.4 million, or 8.8 percent, reduction from FY 2012
- $2.2 million savings from reduced staffing over FY 2012
- 11.5 percent cut in training-related travel/lodging costs from FY 2012
- 12 scheduled capital projects expected to create 800 to 1,600 local jobs
- $41.4 million expected in external funding

This year's budget has also benefitted from improved forecasting and adaptive planning, which allows us to be more nimble and make adjustments in response to changing capital or operational needs.

The water utility sector is one of the most capital-intensive utility sectors. It is substantially more capital intensive than other regulated industries such as electric, gas and telecom, and about 20 times more capital intensive than the Standard and Poor's 500, says the 2009 Water Research Foundation report "Improving Water Utility Capital Efficiency."

Managing, maintaining and upgrading our county's complex and critical water system infrastructure requires not only highly-skilled staff, but long-term planning. To make sure we can meet our commitments and any emergency costs, the district sets aside reserve funds consistent with industry standards.

Over the next decade, the district will invest about $1 billion on critical infrastructure repairs to prevent any major infrastructure breakdown and ensure a safe and reliable water system. Get more financial information or download a copy of our **"Budget in Brief"** at valleywater.org.

To continually improve our operations, we have implemented a comprehensive management audit program, the results of which ensure that the organization is better positioned to address the major challenges ahead and deliver effective projects that benefit the community.

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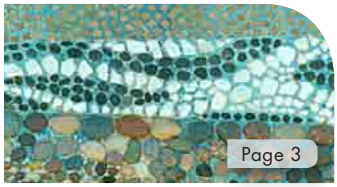

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Safe, clean water for our future

The future of our families, neighborhoods and businesses depends on water and how well we manage it.

Since 2000, many of the district's highest priority efforts have been supported by voter-approved local funding that can't be taken away by the state or federal government. That funding is set to expire if voters don't renew it.

To ensure safe, clean water is here in Santa Clara County for years to come, the district has developed the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Plan, a 15-year plan based on input received from approximately 16,000 residents and stakeholders.

The long-term priorities of the plan are to:

- Ensure a safe, reliable water supply for the future
- Reduce toxins, hazards and contaminants, such as mercury and pharmaceuticals in our waterways
- Protect our water supply and local dams from the impacts of earthquakes and natural disasters
- Restore fish, bird and wildlife habitat and provide open space access
- Provide flood protection to homes, businesses, schools, streets and highways

To implement these priorities, the district is considering placing a ballot measure to renew the expiring parcel tax without increasing rates.

Any voter-approved local funding renewal would:

- Require all expenditures be published annually
- Include exemptions for low-income senior citizens
- Require external oversight by an independent monitoring committee
- Help bring in $360 million in federal and state matching funds
- Stimulate our local economy

The community-recommended Safe, Clean Water Plan is now available online at safecleanwater.org for residents to review and provide input. In late July, the district board of directors will review the plan and determine whether to place it on the November ballot for consideration by Santa Clara County voters.

For more information, call Senior Project Manager Luis Jaimes at 408.265.2607, ext. 2576, or e-mail at info@safecleanwater.org.

Water – the lifeblood of our ever-changing region

For more than 80 years, the district has provided the region's residents with this very valuable resource. In response to community needs, its mission has evolved over the decades, from preserving water supply and protecting communities from floods to also becoming staunch environmental stewards. The one thing that hasn't changed is the organization's commitment to the community it serves.

Excessive pumping of groundwater in the early 1900s led to overdraft and land subsidence, causing the land to sink and requiring deeper water wells. In 1929, concerned about subsidence and drying wells, a group of local farmers and business leaders came together to form the first Santa Clara County Water Conservation District. These visionaries formulated an innovative plan to build reservoirs to capture and store rainwater to replenish the groundwater basin.

Recognizing that water is key to having a strong economy and a thriving community, the district built an integrated water system that includes a network of dams, reservoirs, pipelines, treatment plants, groundwater replenishment facilities and a state-of-the-art water quality laboratory.

Protecting homes, businesses and transportation networks from the devastating effects of floods is one of the main jobs of the district, and since the early 1980s we have invested more than $1 billion in flood protection programs throughout Santa Clara County.

The district also continues to show its leadership in stream stewardship and ecosystem restoration. Since 2000, the district has removed over 4,200 pounds of mercury from local streams and the San Francisco Bay; opened access to more than 65 miles of pedestrian friendly trails; and restored more than 569 acres of tidal and creekside habitat.

To learn more about the district and how it has served our bustling and ever-changing region, visit our website valleywater.org.

Stevens Creek Reservoir

Investing in the future of our water supply

Much of Santa Clara County's water infrastructure was built more than 50 years ago and in need of significant investment to meet the region's long-term water needs.

In fact, a crucial part of our infrastructure that requires special attention is the seismic safety of our dams, which are critical water storage facilities and can hold up to one-third of the water consumed in the county each year.

While these facilities were modern when they were built in the 1930s and 50s, the dams are currently undergoing seismic stability evaluations to determine how best to retrofit them using today's scientific knowledge to meet modern engineering standards. Fixing the dams will be expensive, but must be done for public safety and to ensure reliable water storage.

Similarly, investments are needed to protect parcels that still remain flood-prone. Moreover, potentially catastrophic effects of sea-level rise call for actions to shore up the South Bay levees protecting communities from tidal flooding.

Meanwhile, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, which transports about half of our water supply, is in peril because of fragile levees, seismic risks, declining fish and wildlife populations, and climate change.

To meet these challenges, the district is developing long-term plans to ensure we are wisely planning our infrastructure investments.

Protecting our hidden water resource

The groundwater basins are an essential local water resource that the district proactively manages. Groundwater accounts for about 40 percent of our water supply, and approximately 160,000 acre-feet of groundwater is pumped by local water retailers and private well owners each year.

The district monitors the groundwater quality through sampling from a number of deep wells throughout the county. It also ensures proper construction and destruction of wells to prevent contaminants from infiltrating the groundwater basin.

In addition to being an important water supply source, the groundwater basins have vast storage capacity which serves as protection against droughts. It allows the district to store excess water in wet years for use during water shortages. Although groundwater is replenished naturally through rainfall and other sources, this is not sufficient to balance the amount of groundwater pumped out each year.

So, the district manages and maintains almost 400 acres of groundwater recharge ponds to keep the aquifers full and ready for use. Active groundwater management and monitoring also prevents saltwater intrusion in the north part of the county. Get more information at valleywater.org/Services/Groundwater.aspx.

Protecting water quality

As much as 55 percent of Santa Clara County's drinking water supply is imported from the Sierra Nevada watersheds. As water makes its way through the Delta, rivers, creeks, estuaries and lakes, it can get polluted. To ensure a safe and reliable water supply, the district routinely tests water for more than 353 contaminants.

Every year, our state-of-the-art laboratory conducts approximately 140,000 water quality tests on samples gathered from our water treatment plants, reservoirs and our vast regional groundwater basin. The tests confirm the district's treated water meets or exceeds all applicable water quality regulatory standards.

For monthly water quality reports on untreated and treated water or the groundwater, visit valleywater.org/Services/ProtectingYourWater.aspx.

Don't be an accidental polluter

We must all be diligent to prevent pollution from entering our groundwater basin. Don't be an accidental polluter. Read the labels on packages to avoid products that are unsafe for the bays, our local creeks and the water beneath our feet.

Disposal of left over or unwanted household and garden chemicals is FREE through the County's Household Hazardous Waste Program. Call 408-299-7300 or visit www.hhw.org.

By protecting the groundwater basin, creeks and bays, you are protecting the environment for yourself, your children and future generations.

Visit www.MyWatershedWatch.org for more information.

Santa Clara Valley Water District

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www.valleywater.org

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We speak your language.

Esta publicación contiene información sobre los recursos de agua, la administración del medio ambiente y protección contra inundaciones en el Condado de Santa Clara. Si desea recibir un ejemplar en español, por favor comuníquese con el Distrito de Aguas del Valle de Santa Clara (Santa Clara Valley Water District) al (408) 265-2607, ext. 2881.

Tập tài liệu này gồm có các tin tức về những nguồn cung cấp nước, sự quản lý môi trường và phòng ngừa lũ lụt trong Quận Santa Clara. Để nhận được bản sao của tập tài liệu này bằng tiếng Việt, xin liên lạc Ty Thủy Cục Thung Lũng Santa Clara (Santa Clara Valley Water District) ở số (408) 265-2607, số chuyển tiếp ext. 2632.

Ang publikasyong ito ay naglalaman ng mga impormasyon tungkol sa mga pinagkukunan ng tubig, pangangasiwa ng kapaligiran at proteksiyong pambaha sa Santa Clara County. Para makatanggap ng kopya nito sa Tagalog, pakitawagan ang Santa Clara Valley Water District sa (408) 265-2607, ext. 3714.

此份刊物包含關於聖他克拉拉縣境內的水源、環境管理及防洪資訊。若要取得此份刊物的中文版，請與聖他克拉拉谷水利局聯絡，電話為 (408) 265-2607 轉分機 2631。

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Transparency and engagement

The district strives to be a transparent, accessible agency that engages the community it serves.

The district's board meetings are open to the public and agendas are posted on the website in advance. The meetings are webcast as well as archived, and can be viewed on the web anytime afterward.

We hold open houses, facility tours and program-related public meetings. Notices are mailed to neighbors to keep them updated on projects taking place near them.

You can submit a question, complaint or a compliment on our Access Valley Water customer service center on our website.

The district offers an award-winning Water Education Program which reaches thousands of young people. It also offers students an opportunity to serve on its Youth Stewardship Commission, which enlists 20 teens from various schools to serve as liaisons to the community and to learn about water resources management and potential careers.

We also offer rebates on high-efficiency clothes washers, toilets and irrigation hardware. Find more at Save20gallons.org.

If you want to personally get involved, the district has nine Board Advisory Committees, as well as volunteer opportunities to help keep our creeks clean of trash.

Join our monthly e-mail newsletter list to get information about:

- Attending our board meetings or watching online
- Applying for an advisory committee or the Youth Commission
- Touring a water treatment plant or other facility
- Attending an open house
- Seeing a documentary film about water
- Participating in creek cleanup events
- Scheduling a water education classroom visit

Stay in touch!

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to get eNews, e-mail info@valleywater.org

save20gallons.org