



Safe, Clean Water
and Natural Flood Protection

Fact Sheet

Good Neighbor Program: Encampment Cleanup



Valley Water

Priority B: Reduce toxins, hazards and contaminants in our waterways.

About the project

This project supports the Santa Clara Valley Water District's (Valley Water's) ongoing coordination with local cities and other agencies to clean up creekside encampments that contaminate waterways and damage Valley Water facilities. This cooperative effort includes local police departments, social services and nonprofit groups that help provide alternatives to homelessness.

California accounts for one-quarter of the United States homeless population and the number is growing. Santa Clara County has the third-highest homeless population in the state. Many unsheltered homeless in the county live in encampments along creeks on Valley Water or other public agency-owned properties. Valley Water's mission is to provide flood protection, water supply and stream stewardship. Therefore, Valley Water's role in addressing homeless encampments focuses on programs aimed at reducing water quality impacts and protecting its facilities.

Benefits

Encampments can generate large amounts of trash and litter that end up in creeks. There are also environmental impacts resulting from homeless encampments in riparian zones, including streambank erosion, fire, poaching and human and hazardous waste.

Benefits of periodic encampment cleanups:

- Reduces trash and other pollutant loads in surface water, including streams, reservoirs and wetlands.
- Improves the aesthetics of creeks in neighborhoods and parks.
- Coordinates efforts among multiple agencies to create lasting solutions.

Accomplishments

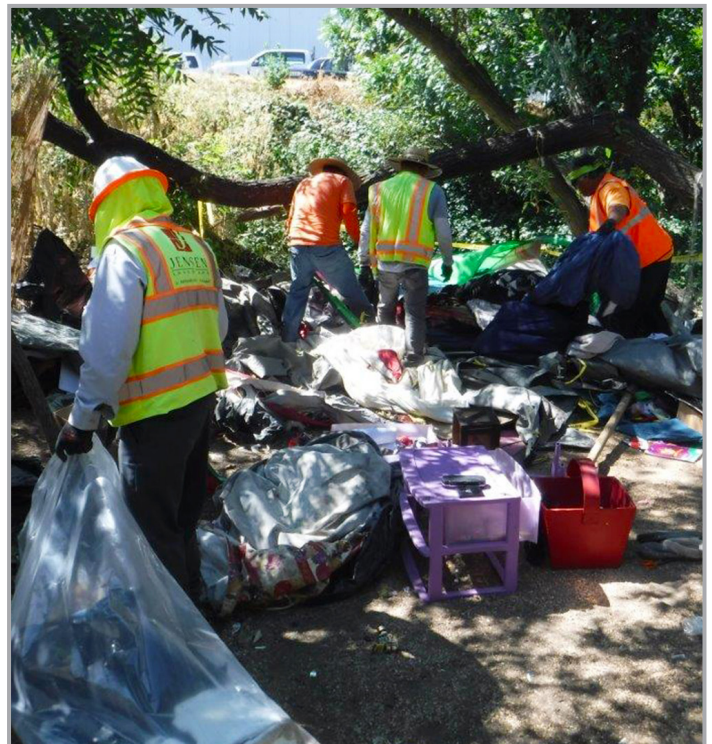
The project commitment is to carry out 52 annual cleanups. Since 2014, Valley Water's annual averages under this project has been:

- 417 encampment cleanups
- \$1.2 million expended on encampment cleanups
- 950 tons of trash and debris removal

Working with local partners

Valley Water partners with local cities, agencies and nonprofit groups to clean up encampments along creeks. Through this cooperative effort, local agencies provide police and security support and social services. At the same time, nonprofit groups also help provide alternatives to homelessness. Most encampment cleanups are conducted in San José and Gilroy.

Under this partnership model, the city provides 72-hour notice to encampment residents via posting, security during clean up, sorting, bagging and storage of personal belongings as required by the state for at least 90 days following the cleanup. The city also provides outreach and support services, landfill disposal costs and disposal of biohazard waste. Valley Water provides the cleanup crews, protective equipment, regulatory permit coverage, transportation of the trash to the landfill and any other equipment needed at the site.



Encampment cleanup along Thompson Creek in San José.

Funding

Encampment cleanup efforts have primarily been funded by the voter-approved Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection (Safe, Clean Water) Program, under Project B4 Good Neighbor Program: Encampment Cleanup. Due to the increasing demand for Valley Water resources to address encampment cleanups from cities and the community, the 15-year Encampment Cleanup project budget of \$5.8 million was exhausted in the first five years. In Fiscal Year (FY) 19, to continue to meet the annual project commitment of 52 cleanups, the Board approved accessing \$175,000 a year from the Safe, Clean Water Program reserves.

Additionally, in response to community demand, the Valley Water Board of Directors has supplemented the project with other funds. In FY19, the board authorized boosting the annual project budget by utilizing 90% of the annual net rental income from properties purchased through the Watershed and Stream Stewardship Fund (WS Fund). This amounts to approximately \$750,000. Furthermore, in October 2019, the board approved the recommendation of the board's Homeless Encampment Ad Hoc Committee to draw an additional \$575,000 from the WS Fund to increase the FY20 project budget to \$1.5 million. The board will monitor the funding approach for Fiscal Years 2021-2028 on an annual basis.

Other Valley Water projects funded by WS Fund and the Safe, Clean Water Program, such as E1: Vegetation Control and Sediment Removal for Flood Protection, also pay for encampment cleanups so that staff can perform their seasonal maintenance work on Valley Water facilities.

Valley Water also provides funding and grants to other agencies and nonprofit organizations to engage the homeless and reduce the impacts of homeless encampments. Furthermore, Valley Water provides grants and partnerships for cleanup, education, outreach and watershed stewardship

activities; and supports volunteer cleanup efforts, including National River Cleanup Day, California Coast Cleanup Day, the Great American Pick Up and Adopt-A-Creek. All these efforts, designed to reduce the amount of trash and pollutants entering local waterways, are funded by various Safe, Clean Water projects.

Addressing safety concerns

There have been growing health and safety concerns for Valley Water field staff and volunteers working along streams or conducting encampment cleanups due to multiple incidents with individuals living or present in the creeks. Safety concerns have led to requests for police officer presence during field inspections and encampment cleanups.

Furthermore, in 2019, Valley Water signed an agreement with the City of San José to pay \$400,000 for the police to conduct patrols targeting criminal activities along local waterways, including Coyote Creek and the Guadalupe River. This effort is funded by Safe, Clean Water Project B1: Impaired Waterbodies Improvement.

About Valley Water

Valley Water, with a history dating back to 1929, manages an integrated water resources system that includes the supply of clean, safe water, flood protection and stewardship of streams on behalf of Santa Clara County's 2 million residents.

For assistance

Homeless Helpline: *(If you are in search of homeless assistance.)*

408-510-7600 or outreach@homefirstsc.org

Homeless Concerns Hotline: (City of San José)

408-975-1440 or homelessconcerns@sanjoseca.gov

Access Valley Water Hotline: (Valley Water)

408-630-2378 or Valleywater.org

CONTACT US

To find out the latest information on Valley Water Water's encampment cleanup project or to submit questions or comments, contact **Jim Choate** at (408) 630-3195 or use our **Access Valley Water** customer request system at <https://delivr.com/2x9ff>.



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