



# COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION  
DRIVE, ROOM 102A  
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

## SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 12/12/2023

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**To:** Boards of Directors, Sonoma County Water Agency, Occidental County Sanitation District, Russian River County Sanitation District, Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, South Park County Sanitation District

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Sonoma County Water Agency, Occidental County Sanitation District, Russian River County Sanitation District, Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, South Park County Sanitation District

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Brad Sherwood 707-547-1927

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

### **Title:**

State and Federal Affairs Legislative Advocacy

### **Recommended Action:**

#### **State Advocacy**

- A) Approve Sonoma County Water Agency's 2024-2025 State Legislative Platform.
- B) Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager acting on behalf of Sonoma County Water Agency and on behalf of Occidental County Sanitation District, Russian River County Sanitation District, Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, and South Park County Sanitation District to execute the First Amended and Restated Agreement for State Legislative Outreach and Representation with Pacific Policy Group, LLC, in a form approved by County Counsel. The amended agreement increases the amount by \$252,000, expands the scope of work to include coalition building, and extends the agreement term by two years for a new not-to-exceed agreement total of \$405,000 and end date of December 31, 2025.

#### **Federal Advocacy**

- C) Approve Sonoma County Water Agency's 2024-2025 Federal Legislative Platform.
- D) Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager acting on behalf of Sonoma County Water Agency and on behalf of Occidental County Sanitation District, Russian River County Sanitation District, Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, and South Park County Sanitation District to execute the First Amended and Restated Agreement for Federal Affairs Advocacy Representation with Thorn Run Partners, LLC, in a form approved by County Counsel. The amended agreement increases the amount by \$264,400 and extends the agreement term by two years for a new not-to-exceed agreement total of \$465,178 and end date of December 31, 2025.
- E) Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager acting on behalf of Sonoma County Water Agency and on behalf of Occidental County Sanitation District, Russian River County Sanitation District, Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, and South Park County Sanitation District to execute the First Amended and Restated Agreement for Federal Legislative Outreach and Advocacy with Natural Resource Results, LLC, in a form approved by County Counsel. The amended agreement increases the amount by \$254,850 and extends the agreement term by two years for a new not-to-exceed agreement total of \$448,350 and end date of December 31, 2025.

- F) Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager acting on behalf of Sonoma County Water Agency and on behalf of Occidental County Sanitation District, Russian River County Sanitation District, Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, and South Park County Sanitation District to execute the First Amended and Restated Agreement for Federal Affairs Advocacy Representation with Van Ness Feldman, LLP, in a form approved by County Counsel. The amended agreement increases the amount by \$248,500 and extends the agreement term by two years for a new not-to-exceed agreement total of \$436,996 and end date of December 31, 2025.

#### **Travel Authorization**

- G) Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager, Grant Davis, and Assistant General Manager, Brad Sherwood, to travel out of state as appropriate to support the implementation of the Sonoma County Water Agency legislative platform. In accordance with the Sonoma County travel policy, the Board must authorize travel for staff who attend out of state meetings more than two times in the fiscal year. This item authorizes the General Manager and Assistant General Manager to travel out of state as appropriate without further separate board authorization if the trips support the implementation of the Sonoma County Water Agency legislative platforms.

#### **Executive Summary:**

This item requests authorization to amend agreements with state and federal affairs advocates to continue implementing legislative priorities, included in the State and Federal legislative platforms. Legislative advocacy on the federal level leverages funding opportunities for Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water) projects, such as climate resiliency, the Russian River Biological Opinion, reservoir re-operations, and extreme weather forecasting. State-level legislative advocacy leverages funding opportunities to research, develop, and implement a coalition to support statewide funding resources for Sonoma Water's service area and the North Coast, and provides outreach services for projects, programs, regulations, and legislation in Sonoma Water's areas of interest. State and federal legislative tracking, legislative development, and pursuit of funding to offset costs are essential for success in fulfilling Sonoma Water's responsibilities and strategic plan. Legislative services are provided to county sanitation districts to support funding needs such as aging infrastructure, recycled water production and distribution, and other needs of the county sanitation districts. The item requests adoption of the State and Federal legislative platforms, which reflect the priorities listed above.

This item also requests travel authorization for Sonoma Water's General Manager and Assistant General Manager to travel out of state as appropriate to support the implementation of Sonoma Water's legislative platform.

#### **Discussion:**

#### **HISTORY OF ITEM/BACKGROUND**

Sonoma Water operates and manages Occidental County Sanitation District, Russian River County Sanitation District, Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, and South Park County Sanitation District (Districts) under contract with Districts. Sonoma Water also operates a hydroelectric plant and allows recreational use over some of its properties. In addition, Sonoma Water is actively involved in efforts to protect and restore endangered or threatened steelhead and salmon species in the Russian River watershed and in implementing a Biological Opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service that requires extensive restoration and biological monitoring. A significant effort is underway to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to a

changing climate, and bolster aging infrastructure.

Sonoma Water is implementing Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations and is actively utilizing and supporting atmospheric river research for drought preparedness and water supply management purposes.

Since 1999, Sonoma Water's Board of Directors has provided direction regarding future state and federal funding authorizations, funding requests, and legislative and regulatory issues of importance to Sonoma Water. Sonoma Water's state and federal legislative programs have previously been submitted for inclusion in the County of Sonoma's overall legislative program, and which are included in the proposed 2024-2025 State and Federal legislative platforms (Attachments 2 and 3). This new platform continues to outline issues most relevant and critical to helping Sonoma Water meet its strategic plan, goals and mission. The platform covers a range of issues including climate resiliency to wastewater treatment and funding opportunities. As such, the platform provides the flexibility needed for staff to promptly address legislative issues as funding opportunities or legislation becomes available. The current list of state and federal advocacy priorities for Sonoma Water include support and often funding for:

1. Climate resiliency, planning, and adaptation.
2. Source water protection and wildfire risk reduction.
3. Hazard mitigation programming and funding.
4. Weather-related initiatives: Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information system, Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations at Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Hydrometeorology Testbed Project Implementation, atmospheric rivers research, flood modeling and drought, and subseasonal to seasonal precipitation forecasting.
5. The Russian River Biological Opinion.
6. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' operations and maintenance activities at Warm Springs and Coyote Valley dams and related fish facilities.
7. Central Sonoma Watershed Project comprehensive planning and rehabilitation.
8. The Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund.
9. Quagga/zebra mussel prevention.
10. San Francisco Bay Restoration.
11. Technical collaboration with United States Geological Survey and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
12. Agricultural Water Enhancement program.
13. Wastewater treatment and collection funding opportunities.
14. Recycled water production and distribution funding opportunities.
15. Enhanced funding and support for groundwater sustainability.

### **State Advocacy**

Sonoma Water and Pacific Policy Group, LLC, entered into an agreement for State Legislative Outreach and Representation, dated July 21, 2022, in the amount of \$153,000. Recent state legislative successes include creation of a California office of Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations, funding for quagga mussel prevention through the Department of Boating and Waterways, and language and funding in a proposed 2024 climate bond that supports integrated regional water management.

### **Federal Advocacy**

Sonoma Water and Thorn Run Partners, LLC, entered into an agreement for federal affairs advocacy representation, dated July 26, 2022, in the amount of \$200,778.

Sonoma Water and Natural Resource Results, LLC, entered into an agreement for federal legislative outreach and advocacy, dated July 21, 2022, in the amount of \$193,500.

Sonoma Water and Van Ness Feldman, LLP entered into an agreement for federal affairs advocacy representation, dated July 21, 2022, in the amount of \$188,496.

Together, the federal legislative advocates have successfully secured ongoing funding for Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information (AQPI) operations, maintenance and operations of Warm Springs Dam and Coyote Valley Dam, seasonal-to-subseasonal (S2S) forecasting programs within the National Weather Service, quagga and zebra mussel prevention, and secured testimonial for key coalition members in Senate subcommittees in support of S2S forecasting. In addition, the federal legislative advocates continued to support coalition building and funding requests for atmospheric river research programs and appropriation requests for local wastewater system upgrades. The federal legislative advocates also organize and submit community funding requests for Sonoma Water to local federal representatives.

#### **SELECTION PROCESS**

Pacific Policy Group, LLC; Natural Resource Results, LLC; Thorn Run Partners, LLC; and Van Ness Feldman, LLP (collectively “Consultants”) were selected from a list of qualified consultants developed from a competitive selection process. Attached is a memo that explains the competitive selection process.

Consultants were selected because of the quality of their submittals in the areas of expertise. In addition, these firms have unique knowledge of Sonoma Water’s issues and of state and federal legislative concerns.

#### **SERVICES TO BE PERFORMED**

Services to be performed for each agreement are described separately below.

The amended agreements below include two options for Sonoma Water to extend the term for a period of one year each by providing written notice to Consultants thirty days in advance of the expiration date of the amended agreements and of the first extension option. The extension will be formalized in amended agreements or amendments signed by Sonoma Water and Consultants.

The amended agreements below also include authorization for the General Manager to make changes to lengthen time schedules or make minor modifications to the scopes of work, which do not increase the amount paid under the agreements, in a form approved by County Counsel.

#### **State Advocacy**

Pacific Policy Group, LLC: Under the amended agreement, Pacific Policy Group, LLC, will continue providing representation of Sonoma Water’s interests in securing state funding and supporting Sonoma Water and partners that assist Sonoma Water in its water supply, water-use efficiency, water treatment and recycling, water quality protection, watershed restoration, California Environmental Quality Act compliance, flood control, emergency services, and groundwater sustainability and related efforts, as reflected in the 2024-2025 State Legislative Platform (Attachment 2).

The additional cost is \$252,000, for a new not-to-exceed agreement total of \$405,000. The new end date is December 31, 2025.

**Federal Advocacy**

Thorn Run Partners, LLC: Under the amended agreement, Thorn Run Partners, LLC, will continue providing representation of Sonoma Water's interests in securing federal funding and supporting Sonoma Water and partners that assist Sonoma Water in its water supply, water conservation and water-use efficiency, water treatment and recycling, water quality protection, watershed restoration, Endangered Species Act compliance, flood control, emergency services, and related efforts.

The additional cost is \$264,400, for a new not-to-exceed agreement total of \$465,178. The new end date is December 31, 2025.

Natural Resource Results, LLC: Under the amended agreement, Natural Resource Results, LLC, will continue providing representation of Sonoma Water's interests in securing federal funding, and supporting Sonoma Water and partners that assist Sonoma Water in efforts related to: coordination of subseasonal to seasonal precipitation forecasting coalition efforts, policies, and funding requests, consistent with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) 2020 report to Congress pursuant to the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act; increasing political support and federal funding for extreme weather forecasting and monitoring initiatives, atmospheric river and hydrometeorology testbed research programs, and assisting Sonoma Water in maximizing other opportunities for federal support and funding for water supply, flood control, fisheries recovery and restoration and carbon neutral economy efforts.

The additional cost is \$254,850, for a new not-to-exceed agreement total of \$448,350. The new end date is December 31, 2025.

Van Ness Feldman, LLP: Under the proposed agreement, Van Ness Feldman, LLP will continue providing federal affairs legislative advocacy related to: coordination of subseasonal to seasonal precipitation forecasting coalition efforts, policies, and funding requests, consistent with NOAA's 2020 report to Congress pursuant to the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act; and maintaining and increasing, if possible, federal funding for those programs that support atmospheric river research, fisheries recovery, climate change and assessment, water supply and quality, and flood protection programs.

The additional cost is \$248,500, for a new not-to-exceed agreement total of \$436,996. The new end date is December 31, 2025.

The 2024-2025 Federal Legislative Platform (Attachment 3) reflects the priorities and tasks that are included in the proposed contracts.

**Travel Authorization**

This item authorizes the General Manager and Assistant General Manager to travel out of state as appropriate without further separate board authorization if the trips support the implementation of the Sonoma County Water Agency legislative platforms. Implementation of Sonoma Water's legislative platform, involvement in multi-state coalition building and participation in trade associations (such as Association of California Water

Agencies, National Water Resources Association, California Special Districts Association) requires out-of-state travel beyond two trips a year. Sonoma Water typically travels to Washington, D.C. two to three times a year to meet with D.C. officials on its legislative platform. Attending coalition meetings and trade association conferences/meetings typically requires an additional two to three trips a year based on legislative need/requests. The requested travel authorization would allow Sonoma Water's General Manager and Assistant General Manager the flexibility to travel immediately or when requested to assist with implementing the legislative platform, implementing coalition building legislative goals (such as the Sub-seasonal to Seasonal coalition Sonoma Water is spearheading with the Western States Water Council) and represent Sonoma Water interests at trade association conferences/legislative meetings.

**County of Sonoma Strategic Plan Alignment**

N/A

**Sonoma Water Strategic Plan Alignment**

Climate Change, Goal 1: Continuing improving our ability to respond and adapt to climate change.

Work performed under the amended agreements will enable Sonoma Water to continue developing and supporting funding mechanisms in alignment with Sonoma Water's climate change and resilience objectives and goals.

**Racial Equity:****Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?**

No

**Prior Board Actions:**

7/19/2022: Authorized Sonoma Water's General manager to execute the following agreements: Pacific Policy Group, LLC, for state legislative outreach and representation through December 31, 2023, for a cost not to exceed \$153,000; Thorn Run Partners, LLC, for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2023, for a cost not to exceed \$200,778; Natural Resource Results, LLC, for federal legislative outreach and advocacy through December 31, 2023, for a cost not to exceed \$193,500; and Van Ness Feldman, LLP, for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2023, for a cost not to exceed \$188,496.

03/02/2021: Approved Sonoma Water's legislative Platform 2021/2022, and authorized Sonoma Water's General manager to execute the following agreements: Conservation Strategy Group, LLC, for state legislative affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, for a cost not to exceed \$114,00; Pacific Policy Group, LLC, for state legislative affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, for a cost not to exceed \$186,00; 9b Group, Inc., for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, for a cost not to exceed \$104,000; Alcalde & Fay for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, for a cost not to exceed \$216,800; Natural Resource Results, LLC, for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, for a cost not to exceed \$210,000; and Van Ness Feldman, LLP, for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, for a cost not to exceed \$203,328.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY23-24 Adopted</b>	<b>FY24-25 Projected</b>	<b>FY25-26 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses	\$254,938	\$514,516	\$256,508
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$254,938</b>	<b>\$514,516</b>	<b>\$256,508</b>
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$254,938	\$514,516	\$256,508
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>\$254,938</b>	<b>\$514,516</b>	<b>\$256,508</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

Budgeted amount of \$59,466 is available from FY 2023/2024 appropriations for the Recycled Water fund.  
Budgeted amount of \$59,679 is available from FY 2023/2024 appropriations for the Water Transmission fund.  
Budgeted amount of \$135,793 is available from FY 2023/2024 appropriations for the Warm Springs Dam fund.  
FY 2024/2025 and FY 2025/2026 appropriations will be budgeted in those fiscal years.

<b>Staffing Impacts:</b>			
<b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b>	<b>Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)</b>	<b>Additions (Number)</b>	<b>Deletions (Number)</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Competitive Selection Process Memo

Attachment 2: 2024-2025 State Legislative Platform

Attachment 3: 2024-2025 Federal Legislative Platform

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

N/A