



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 7/14/2026

To: Board of Directors, Sonoma County Water Agency

Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Water Agency

Staff Name and Phone Number: Grant Davis 707-547-1900, Ryan Pedrotti 707-521-6209

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Watershed Academics to Enhance Regional Sustainability

Recommended Action:

Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to execute an agreement with Sonoma State University, in substantially the form presented to this Board, for research and investigation services through June 30, 2029, in the not-to-exceed amount of \$300,000.

Executive Summary:

Since 2012, Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water) and Sonoma State University (SSU) have collaborated on a program called the Watershed Academics to Enhance Regional Sustainability (WATERS) Collaborative (WATERS Collaborative). The WATERS Collaborative engages SSU students and faculty to assist Sonoma Water with programs related to water management, stream maintenance, water supply, energy, and sanitation services; as well as providing research and recommendations for addressing complex regional water management issues. The proposed agreement will continue to support and build on this existing collaboration.

Discussion:

HISTORY OF ITEM/BACKGROUND

Since the founding of SSU, faculty, students, and staff have been engaged in activities surrounding the regional management of water resources, energy, and sustainability. These activities have been enhanced by the campus' location next to approximately one mile of Copeland Creek, where much of the restoration work is performed.

Collaborations between Sonoma Water and SSU faculty and students have been ongoing for many years through the WATERS Collaborative. Through this program, SSU students have worked on over 100 water resource projects and programs. Many SSU student interns have been engaged in a variety of Sonoma Water programs in environmental education and restoration.

The continuing goals of the WATERS Collaborative are to: 1) create a trained and local workforce of SSU graduates with knowledge, expertise, and interest in water management issues; 2) support contributions of SSU students, faculty, and staff to Sonoma Water projects and programs; 3) improve the effectiveness of Sonoma Water's stream maintenance, water supply, energy, and sanitation activities; and 4) engage a more diverse cross section of SSU students and faculty and a broader network of water management organizations in addressing regional water management issues.

Regarding the fourth goal above, Sonoma Water and SSU are striving to grow and diversify the WATERS Collaborative to include other water management organizations in the region. The intent of this effort is to engage a broader cross section of SSU students and focus SSU intellectual assets towards larger regional water management issues that our region faces. Sonoma Water and SSU have initiated efforts to establish formal collaborations with the Russian River Watershed Association, the North Bay Watershed Association, and the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. Building these relationships will help achieve this diversification goal and allow a phased reduction in Sonoma Water's financial contributions to the WATERS Collaborative over the life of this agreement and the establishment of new financial support from other sources.

SELECTION PROCESS

A competitive selection process was not completed. Attachment 2 is the signed Single/Sole Source Waiver obtained from Sonoma Public Infrastructure Department, Purchasing Division.

SERVICES TO BE PERFORMED

Under the proposed agreement, SSU will:

1. Lead restoration work of the riparian zone along the SSU campus portion of Copeland Creek.
2. Teach a land use and water resources planning and management course.
3. Develop and implement the Laguna Water Quality and Invasives Research Soil and Water Assessment Tool Team to train students in water research techniques.
4. Develop water-related research grants for SSU faculty and conduct a water research symposium for faculty and students.

The cost of services will not exceed \$300,000. This agreement covers services rendered from July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2029.

Through the proposed agreement, the General Manager will be delegated the authority to approve a written amendment to extend the term of the agreement to up to two additional years by providing written notice to the other party thirty days in advance of the term end date and by executing an agreement amendment.

County of Sonoma Strategic Plan Alignment:

N/A

Sonoma Water Strategic Plan Alignment

Goal: Engagement with the community to build understanding, trust, and support for projects and programs.

Strategy: Build collaborative partnerships, trust, and long-term relationships with the community through proactive communications and education.

Action: Establish new and strengthen existing partnerships to bring unique perspectives from under-represented people to further diversify our community members.

The partnership with SSU allows students to gain an understanding of water management, stream maintenance, water supply, energy, and sanitation services, as well as providing research and recommendations for addressing complex regional water management issues. Students are able to provide their own perspectives on these complex regional issues.

Racial Equity:

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

No

Prior Board Actions:

See Attachment 3

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY26-27 Adopted	FY27-28 Projected	FY28-29 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Budgeted amount of \$100,000 is available from FY 2026/2027 appropriations for the Flood Control Zone 1A (\$60,000), 2A (\$30,000), and 3A (\$10,000) funds. FY 2027/2028 and FY 2028/2029 appropriations will be budgeted in the applicable fiscal year.

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Draft Agreement with SSU

Attachment 2: Sole Source Waiver

Attachment 3: Prior Board Actions

Agenda Date: 7/14/2026

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None.