

Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water)

Energy and Climate Resiliency Policy

Sonoma Water has a special interest in energy and climate resiliency matters, arising from a unique set of circumstances:

Sonoma Water relies on a healthy environment to perform its core functions. The climate in which Sonoma Water operates is characterized by dynamic conditions that lead to floods, droughts, and wildfires. These events have grown more extreme under climate change, challenging Sonoma Water's core functions of water supply, wastewater services, and flood management. Sonoma Water has embraced a proactive response to secure our core functions through creative and cost-effective solutions. These actions build our resiliency to climate change and help to protect the public's health and safety for generations to come.

Sonoma Water is a large energy consumer. Sonoma Water is among the region's largest users of electricity. The pumping and distribution of potable water to more than 600,000 Sonoma and Marin County residents requires significant electrical power, as do water treatment processes related to Sonoma Water's wastewater facilities.

Sonoma Water is also an electricity producer. Sonoma Water's enabling statute includes the production of electrical power. Sonoma Water owns hydroelectric and solar facilities which support Sonoma Water's core functions with renewable, carbon-free electricity.

Sonoma Water is a leader in climate mitigation. Sonoma Water is a leader in developing and procuring power from projects and programs that minimize the emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG). Sonoma Water has explored alternative renewable power sources and deployed cost-effective energy-conserving measures such as load shifting, plug-in hybrid vehicles, and LED lighting.

Sonoma Water is a leader in climate science and adaptation planning. Sonoma Water's 2021 Climate Adaptation Plan sets forth a vision for securing climate resiliency across Sonoma Water's core functions. Sonoma Water is a regional and national leader in supporting advances in climate science and adaptation planning, partnering with premier research agencies to characterize and prepare for regional climate threats. Sonoma Water also works closely with local, regional, national, and international entities to advance collaborative climate solutions for broad and lasting impact.

Sonoma Water recognizes that climate resilient communities are the result of equitable practices and processes. Climate change disproportionately impacts low-income and communities of color globally and within Sonoma Water's service area. Sonoma Water is committed to collaborating with low-income and communities of color to develop infrastructure planning processes that result in better outcomes for all members of our community.

Sonoma Water must further reduce GHG emissions and embrace climate adaptation strategies. Given these circumstances, Sonoma Water must continue to develop and procure renewable energy sources while simultaneously pursuing climate adaptation strategies in collaboration with our partners. Taken together, Sonoma Water's energy and climate goals will improve the resilience of Sonoma Water's infrastructure and operations under climate change.

Renewable Energy Development and Greenhouse Gas Emission Mitigation

While Sonoma Water will always be a major consumer of energy due to its operational demands, Sonoma Water is committed to developing and procuring power sources that serve its customers while protecting the environment. It is Sonoma Water's policy to meet this commitment through:

Carbon Free Water - Recognizing the threat to economic security and public safety posed by fossil fuel combustion, Sonoma Water will continue to pursue a net carbon neutral energy supply for all operations. Sonoma Water will pursue this goal through the following actions:

Develop and Procure Renewable Energy Sources - Sonoma Water will continue to develop and procure cost-effective projects that reduce the carbon intensity of its power supply or sequester carbon. Projects could include solar, wind, wave, biomass utilization, geothermal, hydroelectric, anaerobic digestion, or gasification energy systems.

Water Use Efficiency - Decreased water demand decreases overall power consumption. Sonoma Water will continue to promote cost-effective water use efficiency measures.

System Energy Efficiency - Energy efficiency measures reduce ratepayers' costs and decrease overall power consumption. Sonoma Water will continue to implement cost-effective energy conservation measures wherever possible.

Continue to Invest in Climate Science and Innovation

Climate science and the associated risks to human society comprise a complex and evolving field of scientific inquiry. Sonoma Water will continue to invest in partnerships with leading research entities to advance understanding of climate science and related impacts to the provision of Sonoma Water's core services. Considered in tandem with community consultation and indices of social vulnerability, these insights will provide the basis for Sonoma Water's operational and planning decisions. Further, Sonoma Water will strategically seek opportunities to utilize new technologies and tools to advance innovative projects and programs that could potentially benefit the resiliency of its assets and operations.

Develop and Implement Climate Resiliency Strategies

Recognizing the threat of climate change to the provision of Sonoma Water's core functions, Sonoma Water is committed to pursuing a proactive, science-based, and equitable climate resiliency program. Sonoma Water will meet this commitment by implementing its:

Climate Adaptation Plan - To ensure a comprehensive review of climate hazards and potential solutions, Sonoma Water produced a Climate Adaptation Plan to guide its resiliency investments. The Plan:

- (1) Reviews climate-driven vulnerabilities to Sonoma Water's core functions;
- (2) Identifies projects and management actions to mitigate Sonoma Water's vulnerabilities while incorporating community priorities;
- (3) Emphasizes continued collaboration and investments in climate science to support science-based decision making; and
- (4) Introduces a vision for continued updates as new information becomes available.

Sonoma Water will continue to generate and pursue climate resiliency strategies through ongoing research, partnerships, and evaluation of climate-driven hazards with a particular focus on designing solutions with community members facing the greatest climate burdens. The Climate Adaptation Plan will be updated every 5-10 years, as needed.

Pursue Energy and Climate Resiliency Projects of Regional Benefit

Sonoma Water recognizes that our resiliency is interconnected with the resiliency of our regional community. As such, Sonoma Water will continue to develop reliable sources of electricity for the region, including decentralized projects that reduce dependency on outside energy sources and buffer the effects of market fluctuations, natural disasters, and transmission system failures. In addition, Sonoma Water will continue to advance innovative climate adaptation strategies to promote healthy watersheds and build the resilience of our water supply, flood control, and wastewater functions efficiently and cost effectively. To accomplish these goals, Sonoma Water will continue to partner with the County of Sonoma and other local, regional, state, federal, and international jurisdictions as well as non-governmental organizations, Tribes, industry, and community-based organizations. Sonoma Water is particularly committed to partnering with organizations that can help Sonoma Water better understand and ultimately meet the needs of vulnerable communities in our service area.

Building resilience to climate change requires bold action and creative thinking to swiftly reduce fossil fuel reliance and prepare for the impacts of extreme weather.