



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 1/6/2026

To: The Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Water Agency

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

Staff Name and Phone Number: Grant Davis 547-1911

Vote Requirement: 4/5th

Supervisoral District(s): First

Title:

Resolution Making Findings of an Emergency Need to Perform Work to Stabilize Hazardous Conditions Resulting from Pipeline Break within the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District's Reclamation System.

Recommended Actions:

Board of Directors Adopt a Resolution:

- A) Making findings that there is an emergency need to stabilize hazardous conditions resulting from a pipeline break in the reclamation distribution system and suspending the requirements for competitive bidding (4/5th Vote Required); and
- B) Authorizing the General Manager of Sonoma County Water Agency acting on behalf of the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District to execute contracts, not to exceed \$750,000 per contract, necessary to stabilize the hazardous conditions resulting from a pipeline break; and
- C) Ratifying any emergency contracts entered into by the General Manager of the Sonoma County Water Agency acting on behalf of the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District relating to these issues.

Executive Summary:

This item requests the Board of Directors for the Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water), acting on behalf of the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District ("District"), adopt a resolution makings findings of an emergency need to repair/replace the section of the reclamation distribution pipeline in the District's reclamation system due to a break in the pipeline. The District is operated by Sonoma Water pursuant to contract. The break in the pipeline, which if left unrepaired, poses imminent threat of damage to private property, further erosion of a levee, and would inhibit the District's ability to provide recycled water to agricultural users, who the District relies on to dispose of treated plant effluent by providing it as a source of water for irrigation and frost protection.

This item also requests that the Board of Directors for Sonoma Water authorize the General Manager to execute contracts necessary to repair/replace the section of pipeline and ratify emergency contracts entered into by the General Manager related to these issues.

Pursuant to authority delegated in Resolution Nos. 06-0649 and 06-0650, the Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager has the authority to enter into contracts not-to-exceed \$750,000 to make emergency repairs. The estimated cost of the project is \$400,000. The estimated project cost of \$400,000 is based on

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current field observations and limited non-intrusive investigation. Fully defining the extent and root cause of the damage would require additional exploratory excavation, which may further destabilize the levee and worsen existing hazardous conditions.

Discussion:

On December 31, 2025, the General Manager of the Sonoma County Water Agency, pursuant to authority delegated in Resolution Nos. 06-0649 and 06-0650, declared the existence of an emergency for the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District due to a failed reclaimed effluent water line within the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District's Reclamation System.

Staff are conducting damage assessments, so the exact nature of the emergency repair(s) needed is still being determined. On Wednesday, December 31, at 9:30 am, the Staff at the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District's Treatment Plant:

- a) Identified a leak in the reclaimed effluent line,
- b) Approximately 700,000 gallons of treated reclaimed water was discharged into Schell Slough (at a point roughly 1,500 feet upstream of the normal effluent outfall),
- c) Upon discovery of the leak, the failed line was isolated from the system and has subsequently ceased discharge from the broken pipeline.

The leak is located in an area subject to tidal inundation, which presents a challenging repair scenario with significant foreseeable limitations on heavy-equipment access and excavation dewatering requirements. The leak also created a sinkhole near a levee. Although the pipeline is no longer leaking, the sides of the sinkhole continue to peel away into the hole. The levee will need to be repaired in tandem with excavation and repair of the effluent line. In addition, PG&E has a high-pressure gas line located within an easement south of and within 12 feet of the reclaimed water line. PG&E has been notified of the issue.

At this time, given the site conditions and uncertainty associated with the sinkhole and adjacent levee, staff are closely monitoring the area for indications of enlargement or progression that could suggest that the leak has compromised the levee. Over the coming days, staff will conduct daily observations and concurrently evaluate the values at risk in the event of a levee failure, including potential damage to adjacent properties and infrastructure.

Based on consultations with staff, it was concluded that if the pipeline remains unrepairs, further failures are likely to occur, causing flooding, potential damage to neighboring properties, and further erosion of the levee.

Based on the above, there is an urgent need to carry out repairs to the District's facilities. The usual contracting process takes two to three months, starting from a minimum advertising period through bid assessment, awarding, and contract execution. This delay would prevent the timely implementation of necessary preventative measures to protect public health and safety.

Public Contract Code section 22050 authorizes Sonoma Water, on behalf of the District, to enter into contracts for public projects as may be necessary to mitigate emergency conditions without giving notice for bids. Additionally, pursuant to Public Contract Code Section 22035, this emergency work may proceed without adopting plans or specifications. If approved, this item will be brought back to the Board every 14 days thereafter to determine by a 4/5th vote if there is a need to continue the action without competitive bidding.

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The Board is obligated to terminate the waiver of the bid process at the earliest possible date that conditions warrant so that the remainder of the work may be completed under the bid process.

The General Manager has determined that the emergency work is exempt under CEQA because the emergency described above came about in a “sudden and unexpected manner” and poses an “imminent danger, demanding immediate action to prevent or mitigate” loss of life and property as those phrases are used in the definition of the word “emergency” contained in section 15359 of the California Administrative Code and as the word “emergency” is used in sections 210801(b)(2) and (b)(4) of the Public Resources Code; however the General Manager of the Sonoma County Water Agency shall, to the extent he deems feasible in his sole discretion, take steps to mitigate any apparent and significant environmental impacts of the work authorized herein.

Finally, the General Manager of the Sonoma County Water Agency has emergency contracting authority pursuant to Resolution Nos. 06-0649 and 06-0650. Staff recommend ratifying any contracts for the removal/stabilization of dangerous conditions, or related emergency issues described herein, entered into by the General Manager subsequent to the drafting this report to the date of this Board action. The General Manager will report to the Board of Directors on actions related to the emergency declaration every 14 days until the repair has been made and the conditions are safe.

Prior Board Actions:**FISCAL SUMMARY**

Expenditures	FY 25-26 Adopted	FY 26-27 Projected	FY 27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	750,000		
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	750,000		
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	750,000		
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	750,000		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

FY 2025/2026 appropriations for the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District Operations Fund are currently sufficient to cover total budgeted amount of \$750,000. No additional appropriations are being requested at

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this time. Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District may return to the Board with an additional appropriations request at a later date.

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Resolution

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

None