

RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

To ensure that any legal challenge to sewer service charges is not based on contentions or evidence that were not before the Board of Directors, California law requires Sonoma Water and the Districts and Zones to follow a series of steps. These include providing a 45-day comment period, and providing the Boards of Directors and public with a response in writing to timely legal objections. Sonoma Water staff have included all written communications that go beyond a protest to be tabulated in the majority protest hearing.

The comment period began when Proposition 218 notices were sent to customer on March 6, 2026, and concluded on April 21, 2025. Responses to the timely objections are below. In considering the comments and the responses, as always, the Boards of Directors have discretion to clarify, reduce, continue to review, or adopt the proposed sewer service rates in light of the objections and the responses.

Overall, staff notes that no objections raise legal concerns about the legality of the proposed rates.

Several objections express concerns about the hardships of sewer service charges. Responding to these concerns, Staff acknowledges that some customers face hardships and encourage eligible customers to take part in the Sanitation Rate Relief Program. Additional information about that program is available at the following website:

<https://www.sonomawater.org/srrp>

Several objections express concerns that sewer service charges are generally too high. While staff recognize that sewer service charges are high for some Districts and Zones, the budgets relate to the conditions found in each system. For example, the Occidental County Sanitation District is currently forced to truck out sewage. Each District and Zone is in a structural deficit, and most of the Districts and Zones receive considerable subsidies. The subsidies for the Occidental County Sanitation District and the Russian River County Sanitation District are particularly high due to the nature of the infrastructure challenges that District faces. In the Russian River County Sanitation District, Sonoma Water General Fund subsidies over the past five years have been more than \$9.0 million, and \$4.5 million is projected for the next three years making up 15% of the total estimated revenue, excluding potential grant revenue.

The subsidies for each District and Zone are discussed in the Written Basis of Sewer Service Charge for each District and Zone, which are available at this website:

<https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>

The objections for each District and Zone are listed and numbered below, and the responses then follow.

Sonoma Water (all zones)

Airport Larkfield Wikiup Sanitation Zone

Objection by Susan Beckstead:

I am the parcel owner of the property located at the address on the back of this form, or a tenant that is directly liable for paying the Sewer Charge for the property. I am submitting this form to protest the proposed Sewer Charge increase.

Outrageous increase

If, in addition to your protest, you have a substantive objection, attach it to this form and use the heading **Objection**.

limited income over \$1500 a year is way to much to add to my tax!

[Signature]

Signature of Property Owner Required

Susan Beckstead

Print Name

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Rates are by no means set arbitrarily. Information concerning the Zone's budgeting and rate setting is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget> The objection does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law.

Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District

Objection by Pam Hellen:

I really don't know why I keep filling out these objections - For all the years I've done this, the "Objection", never wins!!

I would also be interested to know how much money was spent sending out these very expensive mailers cost, printing, paper & mailing

[Signature]

Pam Hellen

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Noticing through mailers is required by law. All protests and objections are considered by both Staff and the Board of Directors.

Objection by Stacey Eulberg:

Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District
C/O Sonoma Water
404 Aviation Blvd
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: OBJECTION

Dear People:

First, I would like to thank you for doing such a great job in keeping our sanitation needs covered.

I would like to object to the rate increase because of the burden of the high property taxes, sales taxes, gas taxes, and tariffs that are currently out of control. I don't think it is fair to punish the home owners with this fee. Everyone is utilizing this service.

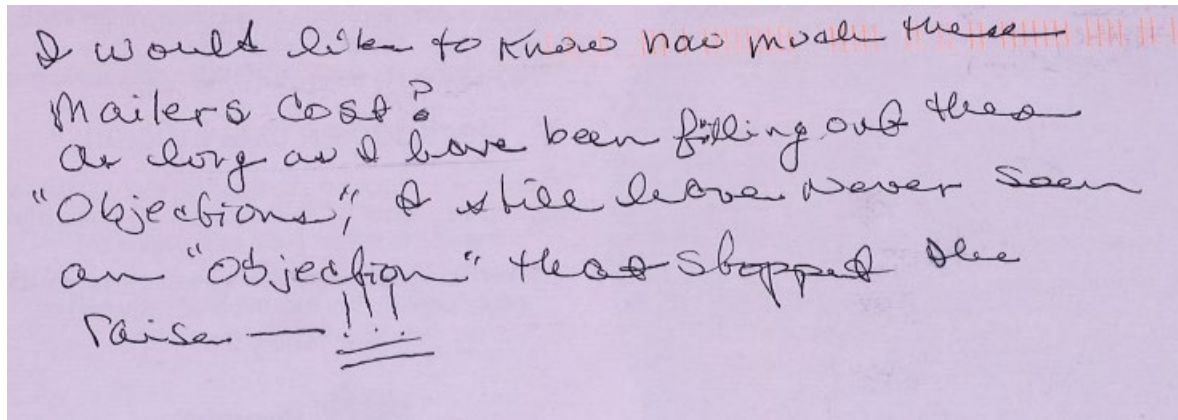
Please reconsider this increase in light of the political and financial climate at the time.

Sincerely,


Stacey Eulberg

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Rates are by no means set arbitrarily, and home owner sewer service charges are set via the "Equivalent Single Family Dwelling" methodology to ensure they are proportionate. Sewer service fees are to recover system costs and they are not intended to punish home owners.

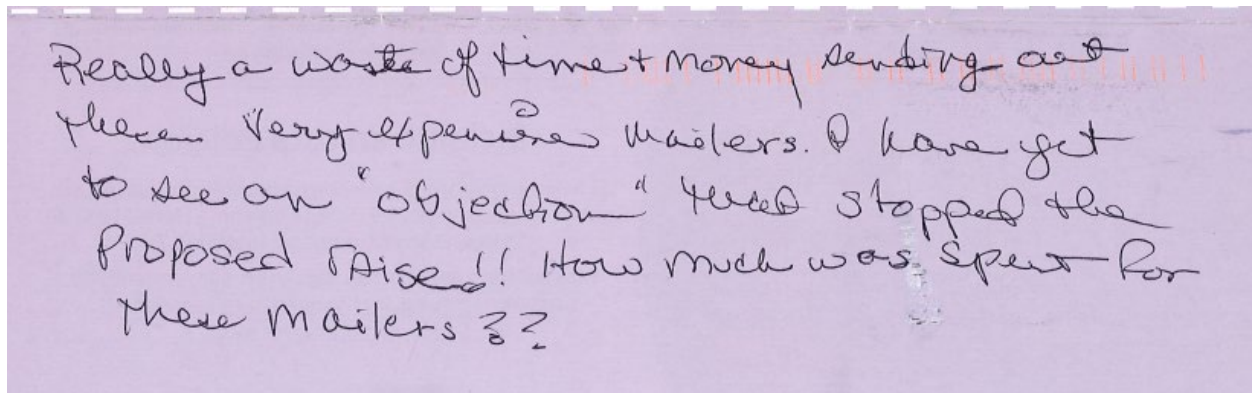
Objection by Pam Hellen:



I would like to know how much these
mailers cost?
As long as I have been filling out these
"Objections," I still have never seen
an "objection" that stopped the
raise — !!!

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Noticing through mailers is required by law. All protests and objections are considered by both Staff and the Board of Directors.

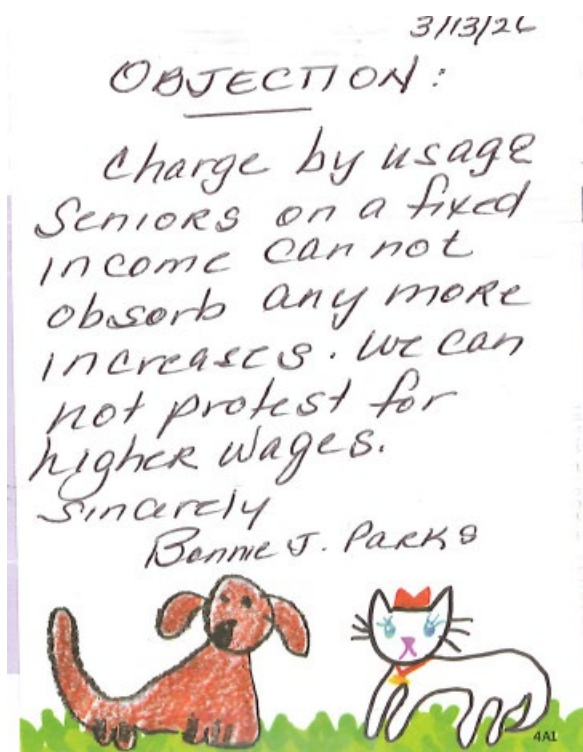
Objection by Pam Hellen:



Really a waste of time + money sending out
these very expensive mailers. I have yet
to see an "objection" that stopped the
proposed raise!! How much was spent for
these mailers??

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Noticing through mailers is required by law. All protests and objections are considered by both Staff and the Board of Directors.

Objection by Bonnie Parks:



Staff recognize the concern, and the Board of Directors has established a Sanitation Rate Relief Program. Additional information about that program is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/srrp> The objection does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law.

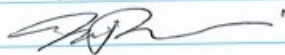
Objection by Michael Boisson:

To sonoma valley county sanitation District

I protest this new Fee Because
IT'S a tax and IT goes UP every
Year. We get charge ON water use
and There's Just two OF us in my
home But ON 1/2 acre so MOST OF
my water Bill is For landscaper
IT seem's that you keep increase
your Plant on the growing sonoma
VALLEY population OF people and Business
with all the Fee's (TAX'S) ON
my property TAX Bill IT won't be
long Before IT'S Bigger Then my
Bill. think out of the box

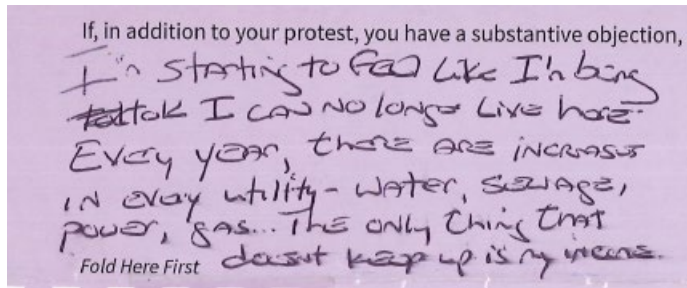
Buy Pumping in Ground water and
selling it

Michael Boisson



Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. There is a volumetric component to sewer service charges in this District, but the majority of costs are fixed and do not depend on flows. Sewer service charges are legally collected on the tax roll. The objection does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law.

Objection by Beverly Seyfert:



Staff recognize the concern and the Board of Directors has established a Sanitation Rate Relief Program. Additional information about that program is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/srrp>

Russian River County Sanitation District

Objection by Judith Fontana:

Objection !

*I am willing to pay my
portion but maybe a
discount for summer homes
That would be great for
seniors! My cabin is
only use June thru Septe*

*Thank you
Judith A Fontana*

*Remember any discount for
summer people would.
Every bit counts ! 😊*

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. The majority of costs are fixed do not depend on flows, and the District is unable to meter all water sources or monitor occupancy. Rates are by no means set arbitrarily, and home owner sewer service charges are set via the "Equivalent Single Family Dwelling" methodology to ensure they are proportionate.

Objection by Frederick Adam:

14850
CANYON TWO ROAD
RIO N 120
OBJECTION 3/9/26
MY SUBSTANTIVE OBJECTION IS
THAT ALL PROPERTY OWNERS
ARE CHARGED THE SAME, NO
MATTER THE USE OF THE SYSTEM
WE ARE VERY PART TIME
RESIDENTS SO OBVIOUSLY WE
USE THE SYSTEM SIGNIFICANTLY
LESS THAN OTHERS. THUS I
FEEL THE TOTAL FEE AS WELL
AS THE INDICATED INCREASE
IS WRONG.

THANK YOU,
Fred Adam
FRED H. ADAM
1616 MADEIRA CIRCLE
21024

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. The majority of costs are fixed do not depend on flows, and the District is unable to meter all water sources or monitor occupancy within this rural area. Sewer service charges are not the same for all owners, and are set via the “Equivalent Single Family Dwelling” methodology to ensure they are proportionate.

Objection by Kathleen Anderson:

Russian River Sanitation
c/o Sonoma County Water
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Subject- Objection

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed sewer rate increase. It is absolutely unacceptable to demand more money from your customers without adequate accountability.

The opportunity for a significant grant to address the necessary upgrades was not arduously pursued and an opportunity of this magnitude was lost.

Until Russian River Sanitation demonstrates fiscal responsibility and competent management, I vehemently oppose any rate increase.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Anderson
9599 Argonne Way Forestville, CA 95436
waterkagold@yahoo.com

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. All grant opportunities are vigorously pursued and the District was recently awarded a \$47.7 million grant.

Objection by Mara Zaharin:

OBJECTION

3/9/2026

I AM THE OWNER OF PROPERTY LOCATED AT 17549 ORCHARD AVE,
GUERNEVILLE CA, 95446. YOUR WRITTEN PROTEST FORM HAS MY
PO BOX LISTED.....LAME....

I AM SUBMITTING THIS FORM TO PROTEST THE PROPOSED SEWER
CHARGE INCREASE.

I OBJECT TO YOUR MANAGEMENT OF OUR FUNDS;

1. THIS PROTEST FORM DOES NOT HAVE MY PARCEL LISTED AS
STATED "ON THE BACK OF THIS FORM"
2. YOUR PREVIOUS QUESTIONNAIRE YOU SENT OUT LAST YEAR
TO SECURE A GRANT WAS SO POORLY EXECUTED THAT YOU
DID NOT RECEIVE THE RESPONSE YOU NEEDED.

MARA ZAHARIN

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mara Zaharin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Pursuant to the Government Code requirements, the District uses the addresses that are utilized for property tax bills. All grant opportunities are vigorously pursued and the District was recently awarded a \$47.7 million grant.

Objection by Greg Stiles:

APN: 072-190-085

RATE PROTEST FORM/ OBJECTION

3/9/2026

I AM THE OWNER OF PROPERTY LOCATED AT 17342 HIGHWAY 116, GUERNEVILLE CA, 95446. YOUR WRITTEN PROTEST FORM HAS MY PO BOX LISTED.....LAME....

I AM SUBMITTING THIS FORM TO PROTEST THE PROPOSED SEWER CHARGE INCREASE.

I OBJECT TO YOUR MANAGEMENT OF OUR FUNDS;

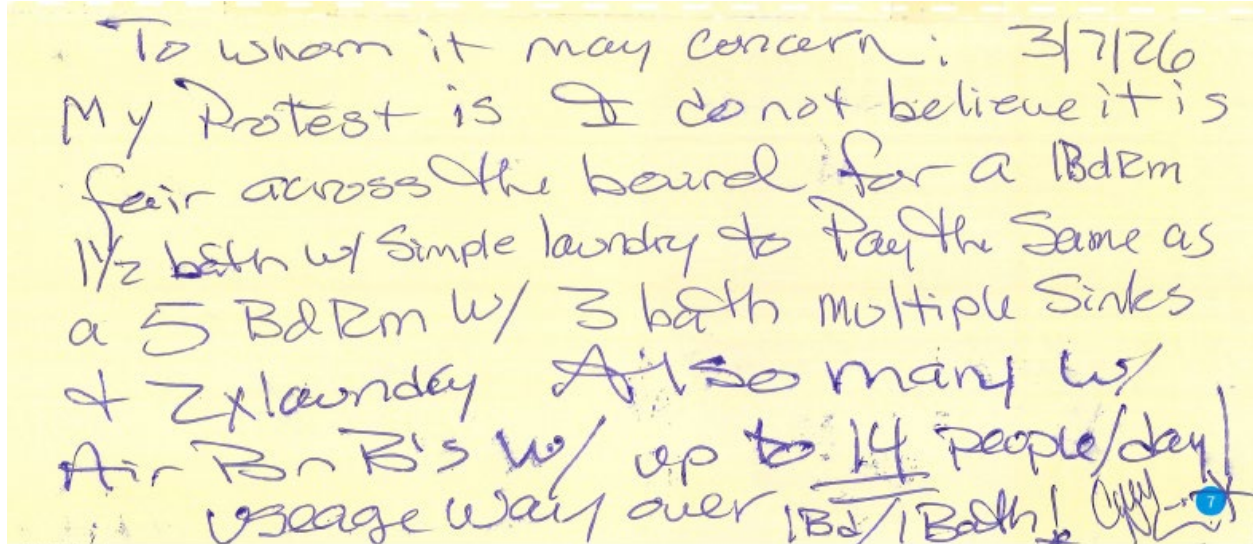
1. THIS PROTEST FORM DOES NOT HAVE MY PARCEL LISTED AS STATED "ON THE BACK OF THIS FORM"
2. YOUR PREVIOUS QUESTIONAIRE YOU SENT OUT LAST YEAR TO SECURE A GRANT WAS SO POORLY EXECTED THAT YOU DID NOT RECEIVE THE RESPONSE YOU NEEDED.

GREG STILES

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Stiles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Pursuant to the Government Code requirements, the District uses the addresses that are utilized for property tax bills. All grant opportunities are vigorously pursued and the District was recently awarded a \$47.7 million grant.

Objection by Caryn Niemcewicz:



To whom it may concern: 3/7/26
My Protest is I do not believe it is
fair across the board for a BdRm
1 1/2 bath w/ simple laundry to pay the same as
a 5 BdRm w/ 3 bath multiple Sinks
& 2x laundry Also many w/
Air Br B's w/ up to 14 people/day
usage way over 1 Bd/1 Bath

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. A large percentage of costs do not depend on flows, and the District is unable to meter all of the varied water sources in this District or intrusively monitor occupancy. Data generally suggests that larger homes are increasingly under-occupied, and small residences often face higher density or "doubling up."

Objection by Alissa Davignon:

Objection

Subject: Formal Objection to Proposed Sewer Rate Increase and Request for Financial Transparency

To Whom It May Concern,

I am submitting this letter as a formal objection to the proposed sewer rate increase. The scale of the increases over the past decade, combined with serious concerns regarding transparency, environmental performance, and rate fairness, raises substantial questions about whether the proposed increase is justified.

Over the past twelve years, sewer rates have increased approximately 83.97%. In at least four of those years, the annual increase exceeded 8%. These increases substantially exceed the rate of inflation over the same period and impose a significant financial burden on residents. Utility rate increases should reflect demonstrable infrastructure needs, measurable improvements in system performance, and reasonable cost recovery. However, the available public information does not appear to support increases of this magnitude.

A review of the publicly available capital project information raises further concerns. The only recently completed project in Russian River County Sanitation District appears to be a project completed in 2021 at a cost of approximately \$1.3 million. Prior to that, two projects were completed in 2012 and 2014 with a combined cost of approximately \$5.1 million. Aside from these projects, the only currently listed active project appears to have a budget of \$529,626.

This raises an obvious question regarding the substantial and ongoing rate increases. If sewer rates have risen nearly 84% over twelve years, residents should be able to clearly identify the infrastructure investments that required such increases. Based on the information currently available to the public, the documented project expenditures do not appear to correspond to the scale of rate increases being imposed.

The published budget also raises additional transparency concerns. The maintenance/capital budget is listed at approximately \$2.7 million. However, residents do not see evidence of maintenance work occurring at a scale consistent with that level of expenditure. Furthermore, the published budget does not appear to include wage expenditures, making it difficult for the public to fully evaluate how collected ratepayer funds are being allocated.

Public project records also indicate that nearly \$2 million was spent on HVAC improvements to the sewer authority's administration building. While maintaining public facilities is understandable, the scale of this expenditure raises additional questions about capital priorities. Ratepayers are being asked to absorb substantial increases while visible investment in core sewer infrastructure, such as pipeline rehabilitation, overflow prevention, and watershed protection, appears comparatively limited. When environmental incidents such as sewage discharges continue to occur, residents reasonably expect that the majority of ratepayer funds will be directed toward system reliability and environmental protection rather than administrative facilities.

Without complete financial transparency, residents cannot determine whether the rate increases are necessary, reasonable, or proportionate to the services being provided.

In addition to the financial concerns, environmental performance must also be addressed. Over the past thirteen years, approximately 9 million gallons of untreated sewage have reportedly been discharged into the local watershed and river. Incidents of this nature raise concerns regarding system reliability and compliance with environmental standards. Sewer rate increases are frequently justified on the basis of protecting waterways and improving infrastructure reliability, yet these discharges suggest that the system may still be experiencing significant operational deficiencies.

The current rate structure also raises fairness concerns. Each household is charged the same rate regardless of occupancy or usage. A single resident living in a one-bathroom home does not produce the same sewage volume as a household with multiple residents and multiple bathrooms. A flat-rate structure forces lower-usage households to subsidize higher-usage households and fails to reflect the actual burden placed on the system. Many modern utility systems use usage-based or water-consumption-based sewer billing specifically to ensure proportionality and fairness.

These issues raise several potential legal and regulatory concerns.

First, public utility rates are generally required to be reasonable and proportionate to the cost of providing service. If fees are imposed in a manner that does not reflect actual usage or system burden, they may be considered inequitable or disproportionate.

Second, rate increases must typically be supported by adequate financial documentation demonstrating the necessity of the increase. If the capital projects, maintenance expenditures, and operating costs do not reasonably correspond to the magnitude of rate increases imposed on residents, this raises serious questions regarding fiscal oversight and rate justification.

Third, repeated discharges of untreated sewage into public waterways may raise compliance concerns under federal environmental law, including the Clean Water Act. If rate increases are being justified as necessary to maintain environmental compliance, then the public should be presented with evidence that such compliance is being achieved.

Fourth, the protest process itself must be meaningful. Residents are encouraged to submit protest forms, yet the outcome appears predetermined as rate increases continue regardless of the level of public opposition. A protest process that does not meaningfully influence decision-making undermines public confidence and calls into question whether the process is functioning as intended.

Given these concerns, I respectfully request the following before any additional rate increases are approved:

1. A full public accounting of how sewer rate increases over the past twelve years have been spent.

2. A detailed breakdown of operating expenses, including wages, administrative costs, and maintenance expenditures.
3. A comprehensive capital improvement report clearly identifying projects funded by recent rate increases.
4. Documentation explaining the approximately \$2 million annual maintenance budget and where those funds are being applied.
5. Consideration of a usage-based or consumption-based sewer rate structure that more fairly reflects actual system demand.
6. A clear plan addressing the prevention of sewage discharges into local waterways.

Until residents are provided with clear evidence that prior rate increases have resulted in measurable infrastructure improvements and environmental protection, approving further increases would be premature and unjustified.

I respectfully request that the governing authority reconsider the proposed rate increase and undertake a comprehensive review of the sewer system's financial transparency, capital planning, and rate structure.

Sincerely,

Ali Davignon
14694 Canyon 1 Rd
Guerneville, CA 95446

Ali Davignon 3/10/26

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. The District respectfully disagrees that it is not transparent. Budget and expenditure information are available at the following websites:

<https://www.sonomawater.org/rate-setting-process>

<https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>

The issues raised in the objection concerning spills increase rather than lower costs. The majority of costs do not depend on flows, and the District is unable to meter all of the varied water sources in this District or intrusively monitor occupancy. Recent research confirms that larger homes do not necessarily have higher occupancies.

<https://www.redfin.com/news/empty-nest-large-homes-2026/>

Objection by James OKeefe:

MARCH 24 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
I WANT TO OBJECT TO THIS RAISE
WE'VE BEEN PAYING A SEWER TAX
SINCE SEWERS HAVE BEEN PUT IN
RIO NIDO, WE'VE BEEN PAYING THE
HIGHEST RATES ON THE RIVER,
THE GOLF COURSE AND THE PEOPLE
TO JENNER DON'T HAVE THIS TAX.
WE FEEL THESE TAXES ARE UNFAIR.

James O'Keefe
15290-CANYON 3RD
RIO NIDO CALIF
95403

CO-JAMES /JULIE O'KEEFE
646-2054 AVE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94121
415 751-4561

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Rates are by no means set arbitrarily. Non-sewered areas do not have public sewer service charges, but do have other sanitation costs. Information concerning the District's budgeting and rate setting is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>

Objection by Daniel Bowa:

3/26/26 RE: Objection

I Tim Bowa am the property owner of 15456
Riverside Dr Guerneville. If you refer to your
records you will understand why I protest a
rate increase. How many more times will a camera
truck be sent to bring back the same information
to Sonoma Water, its not getting any better. I ~~###~~
heard about the first camera truck from a former
neighbor, a plumber by trade, at least 6 yrs ago. I was
shocked. No wonder there are sink holes the length
of this street. I did not know what to do. I thought
I would be notified, I was not, and two years past.
Finally I sent a text message to Linda Hopkins explaining
my understanding of the situation and asked what
would I do. NO response, but two days later a crew
came out, on a Saturday, because I was asleep I missed
them. Green painted location lines were laid down in
front of my residence. Shortly after, it flooded and
nothing more came of it. Not long ago (2-3 months)
another camera crew came. I told them the distance
on my connection to their point of entry. It was
obvious they did not want to talk with me.

Now its not just me but most of the homeowners
in this street have figured this out. The thousands
of \$ I've paid over the last 6 years have done
nothing to correct this situation and now Sonoma
Water seeks a rate increase?? →
AWAR

I would hope some attention is given
to this matter, without the involvement
of the CAL EPA with all due respect

Tim Bowa

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. The meaning of the objection is unclear, but does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law. Information concerning the Zone's budgeting and rate setting is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>

Objection by Lawrence Wilcox:

Sonoma county water agency

8 MILLION GALLONS THIS TIME,

IMAGINE THE AMOUNT WHEN YOU ADD A HOTEL with all it water usage, laundry, pool, showers, irrigation. BUT, who cares about the environment when you can get TOT taxes for the general fund.

Heavy overnight rainfall in Sonoma County has caused a spill of untreated wastewater into the Russian River in the Guerneville area, authorities said Tuesday.

Sonoma Water said in a press release that the Russian River Treatment Plant on Neeley Road was overwhelmed by the rainfall, causing it to reach capacity early Tuesday. Part of the discharge was traveling about a quarter-mile through a forested area before reaching the river downstream from Guerneville in the area of the Northwood community, the utility said.

Residents in the area were notified of the spill by an alert messaging system on Tuesday morning, according to Sonoma Water, while local regulatory agencies and environmental specialists were dispatched to the site to assess the spill's impacts.

The Sonoma County Sheriff's Office advised the public to avoid the Russian River downstream of the treatment plant to Jenner. Russian River beaches are closed, as are Sonoma Coast beaches from Russian Gulch State Beach south to Doran Beach, due to health hazards, the Sheriff's Office said.

Data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [shows the Russian River is currently at elevated levels](#) with flows exceeding 30,000 cubic feet per second.

The Russian River County Sanitation District urged users to reduce wastewater use to help limit impacts from the spill.

Sonoma Water said contact with river water currently poses a health risk, particularly for children, pets, older adults, and individuals with weakened immune systems. The utility said more information will be posted at www.sonomawater.org/rrcsd as it becomes available.

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. The implied meaning of the objection is unclear, but does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law. Information concerning the District's budgeting and rate setting is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>

Objection by Randal Bazzano:

Objection
Russian River County Sanitation District,

Basically I'm aware we need to improve our system.

I'm a IHSS with one live in recipient. My 1040 Schedule 1-A has reported income \$23,220 year ending 2025.

Our utilities, Home Owner Ins, Property tax total \$6,840.31 for year 2025.

Our Car Ins., Medical, Dental, DMV, Fuel and Food expense \$16,379.69 for year 2025.

Basically the consideration for the relief would unburden the household budget.

Your Service is appreciated and the consideration appreciated.

Cordially, Randal Bazzano
15160 Willow Rd, Rio Nido Village
P.O. Box 1293
Guerneville, CA,
95466

Staff recognize the concern and the Board of Directors has established a Sanitation Rate Relief Program. Additional information about that program is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/srrp> The objection does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law.

Objection by Jayce Lattier:

OBJECTION

APN# 071-250-003-000

17878 Orchard Avenue

Guerneville, CA 95446-9785

Joyce Cattrich

Rebecca Baldwin-Trustee Cattrich irrevocable Trust

I protest the proposed sewer rate hike increase.

Jayce Lattier
March 27, 2026

Grounds for Objection

Unsustainable Economic Burden:

The proposed annual rate increases, compounding year-over-year, have reached a level that is fundamentally unsustainable for residents. In a region already grappling with housing affordability crisis, these escalating ^{"hidden"} taxes are driving up the COI to a breaking point. For many in Guerneville and W. County, these fees are no longer manageable utility cost but a primary driver of housing displacement.

Disproportionate Burden on a Small Customer Base

The RR CSD a very small number of properties relative to the total number of properties relative to the total # of parcels in the County. Requiring a tiny pool of ratepayers to bear full weight of aging infrastructure and complex regional environmental compliance is mathematically flawed and inequitable.

Lack of Alternative Funding Diversification:

The district must look beyond the "low hanging fruit" of increasing rates on existing customers. I urge the Board to aggressively pursue and implement alternative funding mechanisms such as:

- Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs)
Using tax increments financing to capture property values and growth to fund capital projects rather than direct service charges.
- Federal and State Infrastructure:
Aggressively pursuing Clean Water State Revolving fund (CWSRF) grants and "Septic to Sewer" conversion funds from the State Water Board, which are often available for disadvantaged or environmentally sensitive areas.
- Regional Cost Sharing:
Seeking broader County General Fund contributions or Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) allocations, given that Russian River's environmental health is a regional health is a regional asset that benefits the entire county's tourism economy, not just the residents connected to the pipes.

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Staff do seek alternative sources of revenue, including grants. ERIF and TOT under the jurisdiction of the County and not the Russian River County Sanitation District, but the suggestion is noted.

Objection by Timothy Cole:

OBJECTION

I object to the pending increase by the Sonoma Water Sanitation district (specifically the Russian River Sanitation District). Previous increases were supposed to address aging infrastructure and upgrades. Despite this, aging infrastructure and an overwhelmed system led to the largest spill of untreated sewage at the Guerneville wastewater treatment plant in January 2026 in more than four decades, prompting officials to identify urgent upgrades. Is it incompetence that led to this, as the upgrades were known and supposed paid for years in advance. Additionally, there has been little notice as to the status of the 47 Million dollar grant pending from the state. Will that reduce our rates for the future? I highly doubt it.

Since 2020 rates have increased approximately 57.4%

Here's a breakdown of the **Russian River County Sanitation District (RRCSD)** annual rate increases based on available data:

Fiscal Year	Rate Increase	Annual Rate (per ESD)
Prior years (before FY 2022–23)	~6%	—
FY 2022–2023	8.9%	—
FY 2023–2024	3.5%–8.9% range*	—
FY 2024–2025	~8.8%	\$2,292/ESD
FY 2025–2026	8.5%	\$2,486/ESD

*Part of the broader Sonoma Water sanitation district range approved that year.

Here are the key details from the record:

- **Pre-2022:** Rate increases in previous years were in the 6% range in an effort to maintain lower increases. [EvoGov Demo Website](#)
- **FY 2022–2023:** A proposed rate increase of 8.9% was put forward to fund both ongoing and emergency repair projects. [EvoGov Demo Website](#)
- **FY 2023–2024:** The Sonoma Water Board approved sanitation rate increases ranging from 3.5% to 8.9% across all districts and zones, driven by the need to maintain and replace aging infrastructure. [CA](#)
- **FY 2024–2025:** The annual sewer service charge rose to \$2,292 per equivalent single-family dwelling (ESD), an increase of \$188 per year (~\$15.67/month). [The Press Democrat](#)
- **FY 2025–2026:** Russian River rates were proposed to increase 8.5%, bringing the annual rate to \$2,486 per ESD. [Sonomacounty](#)

Why rates keep rising: Aging infrastructure and an overwhelmed system led to the largest spill of untreated sewage at the Guerneville wastewater treatment plant in January 2026 in more than four decades, prompting officials to identify urgent upgrades. [Sonoma News](#) The agency is currently in consideration for a \$47 million grant for the Russian River Sanitation District [Sonoma News](#) to help offset some of these costs.

Low-income property owners can apply for the **Sanitation Rate Relief Program**, which provides a 50% reduction on annual sewer service charges for qualifying households.

Russian River County Sanitation District rate increases:

- **Pre-2022 years (including 2020, 2021):** ~6% per year
- **FY 2022–2023:** 8.9%
- **FY 2023–2024:** ~8.9% (within the 3.5–8.9% range approved)
- **FY 2024–2025:** ~8.8% (rate went from ~\$2,104 to \$2,292)
- **FY 2025–2026:** 8.5% (rate went to \$2,486)

Here's the compounded cumulative increase from 2020 to 2026:

Year	Approx. Rate Increase	Cumulative Multiplier
FY 2020–2021	~6%	1.060
FY 2021–2022	~6%	1.124
FY 2022–2023	8.9%	1.224
FY 2023–2024	~8.9%	1.333
FY 2024–2025	~8.8%	1.451
FY 2025–2026	8.5%	1.574

The combined cumulative increase from 2020 to 2026 is approximately 57.4%.

This means a household paying, say, \$1,000/year in 2020 would be paying roughly **\$1,574/year** by 2026. This aligns with the known data points — the FY 2024–25 rate was \$2,292/ESD and FY 2025–26 is \$2,486/ESD.

A couple of caveats: the exact 2020 and 2021 figures aren't precisely documented in available public records (only described as "around 6%"), so the true cumulative number could be slightly higher or lower. If you need the precise starting rate from 2020, that would require pulling the archived RRCSD budget documents directly from Sonoma Water.



Timothy Cole

17545 Neeley Road

Guerneville, Ca 95446

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. The meaning of the objection is unclear, but does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law. Information concerning the District's budgeting and rate setting is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>

Objection by David Bonk:

Year	Rate	Percent Diff from Prior Year	Percent Diff from 2013
2013	\$1,253.00		
2014	\$1,297.00	3.51%	3.51%
2015	\$1,355.00	4.47%	8.14%
2016	\$1,416.00	4.50%	13.01%
2017	\$1,484.00	4.80%	18.44%
2018	\$1,555.00	4.78%	24.10%
2019	\$1,625.00	4.50%	29.69%
2020	\$1,706.00	4.98%	36.15%
2021	\$1,774.00	3.99%	41.58%
2022	\$1,932.00	8.9%	54.19%
2023	\$2,104.00	8.90%	62.22%
2024	\$2,292.00	8.94%	76.68%
2025	\$2,486.00	8.46%	83.97%
2026	\$2,696.00	8.45%	90.36%
90.36% increase in 13 years			

EXCESSIVE!! Are you hoarding money or are you actually spending it on repairs?

The proposed annual rate increases, compounding year-over-year, have reached a level that is fundamentally unsustainable for residents. In a region already grappling with a severe housing affordability crisis, these escalating "hidden taxes" are driving up the cost of living to a breaking point. For many in Guerneville and West County, these fees are no longer a manageable utility cost but a primary driver of housing displacement.

Disproportionate Burden on a Small Customer Base: The RRCSD serves a very small number of properties relative to the total number of parcels in the County. Requiring a tiny pool of ratepayers to bear the full weight of aging infrastructure and complex regional environmental compliance is mathematically flawed and inequitable.

Lack of Alternative Funding Diversification: The District must look beyond the "low-hanging fruit" of increasing rates on existing customers. I urge the Board to aggressively pursue and implement alternative funding mechanisms, such as:

- Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs): Using tax increment financing to capture property value growth to fund capital projects rather than direct service charges.
- Federal and State Infrastructure Grants: Aggressively pursuing Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) grants and "Septic-to-Sewer" conversion funds from the

State Water Board, which are often available for disadvantaged or environmentally sensitive areas.

- Regional Cost-Sharing: Seeking broader County General Fund contributions or transient occupancy tax (TOT) allocations, given that the Russian River's environmental health is a regional asset that benefits the entire county's tourism economy, not just the residents connected to the pipes.

Take action and do something to help us!

David Bonk

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Staff do seek alternative sources of revenue, including grants. ERIF and TOT under the jurisdiction of the County and not the Russian River County Sanitation District, but the suggestion is noted.

Objection by Joseph Carano:

070-320-016 / 070-320-017

4/3/26

To Sonoma Water.

I want to protest the proposed Russian River Sanitation District's increased rates for 2026-2027. I am already paying some of the highest rates in the state. Most folks in the Guerneville area are blue collar workers and not able to afford these increases. Why should so few ratepayers be subject to paying more to support systems that ratepayers in other districts pay much less for. Sonoma Water is yet again, gouging homeowners to pay for the agency's lack of planning and foresight. My home is at 14720 River Road in Guerneville and I strongly protest the rate increase. Mailing address: PO Box 915
Monte Rio, CA 95462
Sincerely, Joe Carano

Staff recognize the concern and the Board of Directors has established a Sanitation Rate Relief Program. Additional information about that program is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/srrp>

Objection by Danio Monroe:

To The Board,
My name is Monroe Danio and I own 14156 Woodland Dr
Guerneville, CA 95446. I am in opposition to the proposed
Fold Here Second

Sewer Service Rate increase. I cannot and will not be able to afford an added charge to my property taxes, which are already extremely expensive, in the proposed amount of \$2,696.00. I am a disabled senior citizen that lives on a fixed income of Social Security. I have zero means of generating such a large sum of money each year. If this gets passed, I will lose my home. Please do not pass proposition 218.

Staff recognize the concern and the Board of Directors has established a Sanitation Rate Relief Program. Additional information about that program is available at the following website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/srrp>

Objection by John Borden:

OBJECTION: Formal Protest: Russian River County Sanitation District Sewer Rate Increase

To: Board of Directors, Russian River County Sanitation District

Attn: Sonoma Water / Clerk of the Board

Mailing Address: 404 Aviation Blvd, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING – PROTEST OF PROPOSED SEWER SERVICE CHARGE INCREASE

Owner Name: Elizabeth Herberg

Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 069-250-031-000

Service Address: 16560 Laughlin Rd, Guerneville, CA 95446

PROTEST STATEMENT: I, Elizabeth Herberg, as the record owner of the above-referenced parcel, hereby **formally protest** the proposed increase to the sewer service charges for the Russian River County Sanitation District (RRCSD).

Substantive Grounds for Objection:

- 1. Unsustainable Economic Burden:** The proposed annual rate increases, compounding year-over-year, have reached a level that is fundamentally unsustainable for residents. In a region already grappling with a severe housing affordability crisis, these escalating "hidden taxes" are driving up the cost of living to a breaking point. For many in Guerneville and West County, these fees are no longer a manageable utility cost but a primary driver of housing displacement.
- 2. Disproportionate Burden on a Small Customer Base:** The RRCSD serves a very small number of properties relative to the total number of parcels in the County. Requiring a tiny pool of ratepayers to bear the full weight of aging infrastructure and complex regional environmental compliance is mathematically flawed and inequitable.
- 3. Lack of Alternative Funding Diversification:** The District must look beyond the "low-hanging fruit" of increasing rates on existing customers. I urge the Board to aggressively pursue and implement alternative funding mechanisms, such as:
 - o **Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs):** Using tax increment financing to capture property value growth to fund capital projects rather than direct service charges.
 - o **Federal and State Infrastructure Grants:** Aggressively pursuing Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) grants and "Septic-to-Sewer" conversion funds from the State Water Board, which are often available for disadvantaged or environmentally sensitive areas.

- o **Regional Cost-Sharing:** Seeking broader County General Fund contributions or transient occupancy tax (TOT) allocations, given that the Russian River's environmental health is a regional asset that benefits the entire county's tourism economy, not just the residents connected to the pipes.

Closing: I request that this written protest be formally counted toward the majority protest threshold under Proposition 218. I further request that the Board reject the proposed increase and direct staff to return with a budget that does not rely solely on the financial exhaustion of local homeowners.

Signature: 
Date: 3-20-26

*will send cc email
to Supervisors*

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Staff do seek alternative sources of revenue, including grants. ERIF and TOT under the jurisdiction of the County and not the Russian River County Sanitation District, but the suggestion is noted.

South Park County Sanitation District

Objection by John Borden:

Objection !! ñ ñ

DURING the PAST 36 YEARS RATES HAVE INCREASED
from \$3 - / 1,000 gal H₂O to your proposed \$ 14.23

A 475% INCREASE OR APPX 13% YEARLY.


NATIONAL INFLATION RATE OVER SAME PERIOD AVERAGE
2.5% W.T.F. ITS NOT COST EFFECTIVE
to grow a backyard VEGGIE GARDEN.

JUST CALL YOURSELVES P.G.E.

IN the 1970's ROHNERT PARK HAD "free"

* WATER SERVICES ☺
AND I HAVE TO PAY FOR *
A STAMP W.T.F.

APN# 043-164-012


JOHN A BORDEN

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. The objection does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law. Information concerning the District's budgeting and rate setting is available at the following website:

<https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>

Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone

Objection by Tamara Wickland:

I am the parcel owner of the property located at the address on the back of this form, or a tenant that is directly liable for paying the Sewer Charge for the property. I am submitting this form to protest the proposed Sewer Charge increase.

If, in addition to your protest, you have a substantive objection, attach it to this form and use the heading **Objection**.

NO RATE INCREASE!!
RATES ARE ALREADY OUTRAGEOUS!

Tamara & David Wickland
Signature of Property Owner Required

TAMARA & DAVID WICKLAND
Print Name

Fold Here First

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. The objection does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law. Information concerning the Zone's budgeting and rate setting is available at the following website:

<https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>

Penngrove Sanitation Zone

Objection by Sarah Royall:

To: Whom It May Concern:

Subject: Objection Sewer rate increase

My name is Sarah, and I am a property owner in Penngrove. I would like to object to any increase in the already expensive sewer charge. The sewer charge on the property taxes already is unaffordable (\$2,300!). With an increase I strongly believe families who are new to the area and have kids will be forced to move to nearby Petaluma or Rohnert Park to be able to afford property taxes. I understand that the sewer system is old and aging. I would hope that with what money is already collected by every property owner from property taxes that this can be used to make any fixes and upgrades.

Thank you for your time,

Sarah Royall
Bannon Lane

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. The objection does not state any issue of non-compliance with applicable law. Information concerning the Zone's budgeting and rate setting is available at the following website:

<https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>

Objection by Susan Lynn:

As a ^{Objection} CARE participant
and recipient of the
Sanitation Rate Relief
Program, I still find it
DIFFICULT to pay my
property tax bill. With
insurance (both home and ~~CAR~~)
increasing by leaps and

bounds for all CALIFORNIA,
any method of reducing,
not increasing Fees ~~OR~~ TAXES
is greatly appreciated. Even
the state's Quo is a help.
Sincerely,
SKL Lynn
Susan K. Lynn

Staff recognize the concern and the Board of Directors has established a Sanitation Rate Relief Program, which the objection references. Staff's recommendation is to continue this program, as suggested.

Objection by Sandra & Donald McMinn:

OBJECTION

We bought our small 2 bedroom, 1 ½ baths, 1171 square foot home in Penngrove in 2012. In 2014 we added a 2 bedroom, 1 bath, 750 square foot ADU for my husband's mother, who could no longer live alone. We were shocked when we realized that the ADU generated an additional 80% of the annual sewer charge.

We have watched these charges increase steadily year after year. This fiscal year, with the ADU, we are paying \$344.70 **per month** just for sewer, and water isn't cheap here either. This new proposal will bring the cost to \$371.40 per month, a huge expense for sewer alone, especially since the 2 homes only have a total of 4 bedrooms & 2 ½ baths combined and less than 2,000 square feet total.

There was a survey done some time ago to see if usage could be measured for fairer rates. We had hoped that this would be the solution but the survey failed, the county determined it couldn't be done. We hope that a fair solution can be achieved going forward. There must be some answer, perhaps eliminating the percentage rate on ADUs entirely or at least lowering the percentage rate based on square footage and/or number of residents could be an option.

We would also like to add that the ever increasing charge on our property tax bill is a very detrimental selling point if we should ever move.

Last, since these rates are really starting to hurt people in the 8 affected areas we think a moratorium on annual raises is in order. We are aware that infrastructure costs are high but we also personally continue to face rising costs on almost everything and we have no one to pass these costs onto.

Thank you for your attention to this protest.

Sandra C. McMinn & Donald C. McMinn

Sandra C. McMinn & Donald C. McMinn

Staff appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback. Rates are by no means set arbitrarily, and homeowner sewer service charges are set via the "Equivalent Single Family Dwelling" methodology to ensure they are proportionate. Eliminating sewer service charges for Accessory Dwelling Units would not be proportionate and therefore would not be legal under the California Constitution. Staff appreciate the suggestions, which will be carried forward for consideration in the rate study process that is currently underway.