

Attachment 9

05-12-2026 WA Sewer Rates Fee Hearing Sanitation Rate Relief Program

Sonoma Water received Board authority on May 23, 2023, to implement a Sanitation Rate Relief Program for all the Zones and Districts, and based on three successful years, is requesting ongoing authority from the Board subject to budget ratification. Staff requests authorization for a program with substantially the same components as the FY 2025/2026 program. Program components are as follows:

- The program may use up to \$600,000 from Sonoma Water's General Fund to pay one half of eligible low-income customer sewer bills for the subsequent fiscal year's sewer service charges on the property tax roll.
- Eligible customers must either be a current participant in the PG&E CARE Program or have a total gross income of 75% or less of the area median family income, which will be determined by the current Sonoma County Housing Authority income limits.
- The program has these eligibility restrictions: (1) customers who own their home and live in the home as their primary residence, including landlords who reside on-site and rent out a part of their property, (2) 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that provide housing to low-income renters that show evidence that they rent 85% or more of their properties to tenants that have household earnings of 75% or less of the area median family income, or (3) 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that operate homeless shelters and house residents who do not pay rent.
- Eligibility for landlords is evaluated based on the applicant's total gross household income, including any rental income. Upon qualification, the program will assess whether rate relief savings must be passed through to tenants, depending on tenants' income eligibility. If such pass-through is required, the landlord will be required to execute an agreement with Sonoma Water and provide documentation demonstrating that the savings have been distributed to the tenants.
- If 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations qualify, they will be required to execute an agreement with Sonoma Water and provide documentation demonstrating that the savings have been distributed.
- The Zones and Districts will post information about the program on the Sonoma Water website and conduct outreach through social media. Sonoma Water will accept applications from April 16 through June each year so that rebates can be placed on the property tax roll for the following fiscal year. Sonoma Water will review the applications and apply the subsidized reduction to the property tax roll.
- Applications will be accepted until funds are exhausted and a waiting list will be maintained. Sonoma Water will monitor and evaluate program effectiveness following Board approval and program implementation.