



# County of Santa Cruz

## Water Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street room 312, Santa Cruz, CA, 95060

Phone: (831) 454-2022 <https://scceh.com/>



# Water Advisory Commission 2024-2025

## Biennial Report

This report summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission (WAC) during 2024 and 2025.

### **ROLES OF THE WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION**

The WAC was established in 1975 to serve as a policy advisory body to the Board of Supervisors (Board) on issues relating to the use and protection of the county's water resources.

In 2024, the County completed a commission restructuring process, which included changes to SCCC 2.38 overseeing the role of the County's commissions. In response, the section of the SCCC overseeing the Water Advisory Commission, SCCC 2.69, as well as the bylaws overseeing the work of the WAC were changed. The changes removed some duties that were duplicative of the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission, and added duties that reflect the WAC's responsibilities under Senate Bill 552.

The roles of the Commission, as outlined in the updated SCCC 2.69 are as follows:

- (A) Advise the Board of Supervisors on all matters relating to water policy.
- (B) Recommend policies to the Board of Supervisors to ensure that the production of water and the development of additional water supplies are consistent with the growth management program and the General Plan of Santa Cruz County.
- (C) Recommend to the Board of Supervisors any policies necessary to protect surface water, groundwater, and recreational resources of Santa Cruz County.



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- (D) Facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for State small water systems and domestic wells within Santa Cruz County.
- (E) Provide opportunities for coordinating and communicating with the State and other local governments, community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents on a regular basis and during drought or water shortage emergencies.
- (F) Undertake other duties relating to water resources, as requested by the Board of Supervisors.

Staffing, funding, and other resources available to the WAC necessarily limit the duties and responsibilities outlined above. Therefore, the WAC utilizes discretion in devoting time to those activities that are most important to achieving its overall goal of enhancing and preserving Santa Cruz County water resources through its 2-year workplan. County departments (Environmental Health, General Services, Community Development and Infrastructure, and the Office of Response, Recovery, and Resiliency) assist the WAC in its work as appropriate.

### COMMISSION STRUCTURE

The Commission consists of seven members, five of whom are concerned citizens nominated by individual supervisors and two that are appointed at-large. The two at-large positions represent public water purveyors and small private or mutual water companies in the county. In April 2024, Paul Lego was elected to serve as Chair and Frank Cheap was elected to serve as Vice-Chair. In April 2025, Nate Gillespie was elected to serve as Chair and Brian Lockwood as Vice-Chair.

Membership during 2024-2025 was as follows:

1st District: Frank Cheap
2nd District: Ray Pereyra, vacant



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3rd District: Linda Wilson

4th District: Brian Lockwood

5th District: Bryan Largay, vacant, Sarah Easley-Perez

Public Water: Nate Gillespie from Scotts Valley Water District

Small Water System: Paul Lego from San Andreas Mutual Water Company

### COMMISSION STAFF

Sierra Ryan, the Water Resources Program Manager in the EH division of the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, served as administrative secretary to the WAC throughout the reporting period.

### MEETING DATES, TIME AND LOCATION

In 2024-25, meetings were held from 4-6 pm on the first Wednesday of even numbered months. Agendas are posted at least five days in advance of meetings, and are distributed electronically to local water districts and interested persons. Agendas and attachments are posted on the County website: <http://scceh.com/Home/Programs/WaterResources/WaterAdvisoryCommission.aspx>. Meetings are held at 701 Ocean Street, in the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Redwood Room unless otherwise posted on the agenda.

See Table 1 for specific dates, locations, and attendance of each meeting.

Table 1: Specific Meeting Dates, Attendance, and Locations

## **GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

All information regarding the Commission activities is available on the internet. The website facilitates data access and makes the Commission's work more available to the public. The Commission website address is:

**<http://scceh.com/Home/Programs/WaterResources/WaterAdvisoryCommission.aspx>**

In addition to preparing an agenda and minutes from the previous meeting, staff regularly includes pertinent water related articles in the Commission agenda packets to stimulate discussion on related topics.

Listed below are the principal issues and events that were discussed by the Commission during the past two years, as prioritized in the 2024-2025 Work Plan:

- 1) Current water quality issues in Santa Cruz County: Presentations and discussions included PFAS treatments, hexavalent chromium rules, and implementation of the Local Agency Management Program (LAMP) including water quality monitoring.
- 2) Sustainable Groundwater Management: The Commission received written updates from the three GSAs in the county at every meeting. The Commission led the process to update the well ordinance, which had groundwater management implications. Those changes went into effect in August 2025.
- 3) Drought and climate change impacts on water resources: The Commission recommended changes SCCC chapter 2.96 to reflect the responsibility of the WAC to address drought and climate change, which were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2024. The WAC received written updates on the well testing and bottled water delivery program operated through the County at every meeting. The WAC had recommended that the County update the well GIS layer to better capture the location and depth of domestic wells. Staff completed the work and presented the updated database to the WAC in 2025.
- 4) Water System Consolidation: The WAC held a joint meeting with the Small Water Systems Forum in 2025 to discuss a staff-led project to study the feasibility for consolidation of all the small systems with their nearest large neighboring system. They also provided feedback on a guidebook that staff is developing to instruct water systems on their options when they are faced with long-term challenges.



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5) Coordination with other commissions: The WAC communicated with the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission during the commission restructuring process. With that process, fewer areas of overlap between the two commissions exist, so the WAC determined that it did not need to pursue the Intercommission Working Group at this time.

### **FUTURE GOALS**

In the coming years the Commission will be following-up on current endeavors. These endeavors include oversite of SB 552 implementation, commenting on and providing recommendations to the Board on County Water Resource efforts, and staying abreast of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act implementation and water supply projects. The WAC intends to continue its trend of soliciting information from various individuals and agencies as this information relates to water resources in the county. As always, the WAC will continue to evaluate important issues affecting the County's water resources, respond to requests by the Board and the public, and make timely recommendations on both policy and other appropriate matters.

Prepared by:

Sierra Ryan

Administrative Secretary, Water Advisory Commission