



City of Santa Cruz Public Works
809 Center Street, Room 201
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

cityofsantacruz.com/sewer-rates

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City of Santa Cruz Public Works Prop. 218 Notice of Proposed Wastewater Rate Increase

March 2025

Para obtener información en español, visite cityofsantacruz.com/sewer-rates

Environmental Stewardship

The Santa Cruz Wastewater Treatment Facility produces 68% of the energy it uses, which saves customers money and helps reduce the city's carbon footprint. The plant generates green power from on-site biogas and solar energy systems. These energy-saving achievements have earned us recognition as an Environmental Protection Agency Green Power Partner.

The daily plant flow of about 10 million gallons is enough to fill over 15 Olympic-size pools. Five million gallons are generated within the city and the remainder comes from the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District including Live Oak, Capitola, Soquel, and Aptos. The facility is a regional partner with Soquel Creek Water District, providing 2.92 million gallons per day of source water for the district's Pure Water Soquel Water Purification Center, which is used to recharge the critically over drafted Mid-County Groundwater Basin.

Treated water that is not re-used on site is released through an ocean outfall pipe approximately 1 mile off shore of Mitchell's Cove and far below the ocean's surface. The plant's state-of-the-art treatment ensures that the water entering Monterey Bay is safe and clean for all forms of life. Environmental stewardship extends further as centrifuges remove water from biosolids which are then transported to the Central Valley for use as soil amendment on nonfood crops.

Notice of Public Hearing

The Santa Cruz City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed wastewater rate increases. Tuesday, June 10, 2025, after 10 a.m. | City Council Chambers, 809 Center Street, Santa Cruz

Written Protests: Any property owner or a tenant who is the property's Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities (SCMU) account holder may submit a written protest for the proposed rate increases. Only one written protest per parcel, filed by an owner or qualified tenant, will be counted. Only written protests that are received prior to the conclusion of the public hearing on June 10, 2025, and include the writer's name, address and/or assessor parcel number, and signature will be counted to determine whether a majority protest to the proposed rate increase exists. Written protests may be mailed or hand delivered to: Mayor and Council of Santa Cruz, 809 Center Street, Room 10, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

Exhaustion of Administrative Remedies: Anyone wishing to challenge the proposed rate increases must first submit a written legal objection, which will only be considered valid if it: 1) is in writing; 2) objects to the proposed rate increase and specifies the legal grounds for alleging that the proposed rate increase does not comply with Proposition 218; 3) identifies the parcel by assessor's parcel number or street address; 4) includes the name of the objecting owner of record or tenant who is the property's SCMU account holder; and 5) is received before the conclusion of the Public Hearing on June 10, 2025. Failure to meet these requirements bars any right to challenge the proposed rate increase in a legal proceeding. Legal objections must be mailed or hand delivered to: Mayor and Council of Santa Cruz, 809 Center Street, Room 10, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Per Gov. Code § 53759, a 120-day statute of limitations applies for any judicial action or proceeding challenging any new, increased, or extended sewer fee or charge. **For more information, visit cityofsantacruz.com/sewer-rates**



Maintaining Our Wastewater System

Every day, residents of the City of Santa Cruz generate approximately 5 million gallons of wastewater from sinks, showers, toilets, washing machines, and dishwashers. It flows from homes and businesses through the wastewater collections system that is made up of 160 miles of pipe to the award-winning Wastewater Treatment Facility. In maintaining this collections system, City crews annually clean nearly 100 miles of pipeline and replace up to 5,000 feet of old pipe. They constantly service 21 pump stations.

Upon arrival at the Wastewater Treatment Facility, an environmentally-friendly process is used to treat the wastewater to secondary standards meeting all regulatory requirements. Operating equipment includes pre-aeration grit removal tanks, sedimentation tanks, trickling filters, anaerobic digesters, secondary clarifiers, centrifuges and an ultraviolet disinfection system. This complex processing system requires continual service.

In order to maintain the Wastewater Treatment Facility and collections system that provide our community with an essential quality-of-life service, the City of Santa Cruz is proposing a wastewater rate increase. The new rates will support the replacement of aging treatment facility equipment and sanitary sewer pipes, as well as the estimated annual increase in costs for labor, materials, energy and outside services.

Why Are Rate Increases Needed?

The proposed rate increases are essential to sustain the city's wastewater system, which faces mounting challenges from aging infrastructure and rising operational costs. Critical components, such as pipelines and parts of the treatment plant, have outlived their service life and urgently need replacement.

Although city staff have diligently maintained and repaired essential equipment, the last major upgrade to the wastewater plant was over 30 years ago. A recent study of over 2,000 assets has identified hundreds that must be replaced within the next five years, with several large-scale projects already underway, including a \$20 million project in construction and a \$50 million electrical system overhaul. As the treatment plant is a regional facility, city rate payers will fund approximately half of these costs.

The proposed rates also address the escalating costs of labor, materials, energy, and outside services, which are expected to rise by 3-4% annually. To continue providing reliable wastewater services, safeguard public health, and protect the city's quality of life, these rate adjustments are not just necessary — they are crucial.

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Wastewater Rates

All rates are determined on a cost-of-service basis.

Date New Rate Will Appear on Bill	Current Rates		Proposed Wastewater Rates									
			July 1, 2025		July 1, 2026		July 1, 2027		July 1, 2028		July 1, 2029	
Percent Increase			8%		8%		8%		7%		7%	
Customer Classification	Fixed Monthly Rate	Quantity Rate \$/CCF	Fixed Monthly Rate	Quantity Rate \$/CCF	Fixed Monthly Rate	Quantity Rate \$/CCF	Fixed Monthly Rate	Quantity Rate \$/CCF	Fixed Monthly Rate	Quantity Rate \$/CCF	Fixed Monthly Rate	Quantity Rate \$/CCF
Residential (Per Dwelling Unit)												
Single Family	\$65.00	N/A	\$69.74	N/A	\$75.32	N/A	\$81.35	N/A	\$87.04	N/A	\$93.13	N/A
Multi-Family	\$53.10	N/A	\$57.58	N/A	\$62.19	N/A	\$67.17	N/A	\$71.87	N/A	\$76.90	N/A
Low Sewage Producers	\$38.20	N/A	\$41.94	N/A	\$45.30	N/A	\$48.92	N/A	\$52.34	N/A	\$56.00	N/A
Commercial												
Low Strength	Varies	\$4.88	\$47.71	\$5.25	\$51.53	\$5.67	\$55.65	\$6.12	\$59.55	\$6.55	\$63.72	\$7.01
Medium Strength	Varies	\$4.99	\$47.71	\$5.79	\$51.53	\$6.59	\$55.65	\$7.12	\$59.55	\$7.62	\$63.72	\$8.15
High Strength	Varies	\$10.82	\$47.71	\$12.22	\$51.53	\$13.61	\$55.65	\$14.70	\$59.55	\$15.73	\$63.72	\$16.83
Industrial and Other												
UCSC - Main Campus	\$66,886.30	\$10.66	\$71,471.30	\$11.58	\$77,189.00	\$12.51	\$83,364.12	\$13.51	\$89,199.61	\$14.46	\$95,443.58	\$15.47
Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant	\$5,511.40	\$16.70	\$3,150.03	\$19.30	\$3,402.03	\$20.84	\$3,674.19	\$22.51	\$3,931.38	\$24.09	\$4,206.58	\$25.78
Landfill Leachate	\$2,769.40	\$8.51	\$3,071.12	\$9.09	\$3,316.81	\$9.82	\$3,582.15	\$10.61	\$3,832.90	\$11.35	\$4,101.20	\$12.14
Industrial	\$238.40	\$6.70	\$252.30	\$7.25	\$272.48	\$7.83	\$294.28	\$8.46	\$314.88	\$9.05	\$336.92	\$9.68
Septage	N/A	\$100.99	N/A	\$109.07	N/A	\$117.80	N/A	\$127.22	N/A	\$136.13	N/A	\$145.66

Residential Rates

Residential rates are fixed and do not change month-to-month. Although a flat rate is used, the rate is based on the average amount of sewage generated by that user type.

Commercial Rates

All commercial users are charged a flat monthly fee plus a quantity charge based on water use. Commercial users are classified as low, medium, or high strength depending on the strength of their wastewater.

Utility Customer Assistance Program (UCAP)

UCAP is designed to assist Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities (SCMU) customers who are experiencing financial insecurity and having difficulty paying their bills on time and/or in full. Individuals can enroll in UCAP if they meet the following requirements:

- Are experiencing financial hardship.
- Have an active/current single-family SCMU account in their name.
- Are currently enrolled in the PG&E CARE program (or any of the other following government assistance programs: Cal Fresh, Medi-Cal or Medicaid, WIC, SSI, CalWORKs, or General Assistance)

For more information about UCAP, visit cityofsantacruz.com/ucap

Survey of Monthly Single Family Wastewater Charges

