




# Community Report

2019–2020



Your Community Partner for Reliable Water >>

The background features a light blue water splash with numerous bubbles. A solid blue vertical bar is positioned on the right side of the page. Two large white arrows point to the right, overlapping the blue bar. The main text is in a bold, black, sans-serif font, starting with a double arrow symbol (») and followed by a quote.

» **“It’s really all about you—the people, families, businesses, and facilities we serve today, and for the generations to come.”**

*~ Ron Duncan, Soquel Creek Water District General Manager*

# MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

I'm pleased to present to you the Soquel Creek Water District's 2019–2020 Community Report.

Everyone has had to deal with many changes during 2020, in both our professional and personal lives. How we manage our daily activities — with families, co-workers, friends, customers, and others — has been transformed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The District had already been using #InThisTogether to illustrate our partnership with the community around water resource issues. Now, as we've all worked collectively (but socially-distant) to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, that hashtag is more relevant than ever before.

Despite these and other challenges, the District was able to achieve a great deal during the past fiscal year. Beyond providing reliable, clean drinking water every day to over 45,000 customers, we continue to confidently move into the future, with the start of construction on the Pure Water Soquel Project. This is direct action to address the critical overdraft condition of our groundwater basin, and prevent further seawater intrusion. We've also made other significant strides in the implementation of our Community Water Plan. The community's investment in water resources, through water rates, and your support and encouragement, have been very important in getting us to this point. We are proud to be your community partner for reliable water. Please accept my gratitude, and my assurance that we will continue to persevere toward our goals on behalf of the community we serve.

I also want to thank our District staff, who have been remarkable in carrying out their essential duties both before and after the onset of the pandemic.

My thanks as well to the members of our District Board of Directors who have shown extraordinary leadership, prudence, and foresight in their direction of the District.

We hope you enjoy this 2019–2020 Community Report. It's really all about you — the people, families, businesses, and facilities we serve today, and for the generations to come.

Thank you,



Ron Duncan  
*General Manager*



**“Our water problem isn’t ideological or political — the overdrafting of our groundwater basin is a genuine threat to our community. I applaud the District for its foresight and innovative planning to protect our water for the future — for everyone’s future here in the mid-coast area.”**

*~ Administrator, Twin Lakes Church*

Pure Water Soquel will take already-treated wastewater and put it through a state-of-the-science advanced purification process. That purified water will be pumped into the critically-overdrafted underground aquifer to blend with the groundwater, act as a barrier to seawater contamination, and supplement our water supply. Construction on this project began this year. With the community’s support, significant outside funding was acquired from state and federal grants and low-interest loans.

The future of our water is within reach — and the District is dedicated and committed to bringing this project to the community and safeguarding our water supply for future generations.

**Selected Pure Water Soquel accomplishments:**

- » The project was awarded a \$50 million Proposition 1 Groundwater Implementation grant from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)
- » The project was selected to receive a low-interest loan through the SWRCB’s Seawater Intrusion Control Loan Program
- » The federal Environmental Protection Agency selected the project for a low-interest loan through its Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Program
- » The project is in various stages of design and construction of the treatment facilities, pipelines, and seawater intrusion prevention wells, and the project is on-track to be completed and operational by the end of 2022/early 2023



The District's 2019–2020 general fund budget was about \$39 million. The costs to provide reliable water continue to increase, and we are implementing projects and programs to prevent further seawater intrusion and provide water supply resiliency — which come with significant capital costs. We keep in mind the very foundation of our commitment to you — the responsible, judicious handling of the District's finances.

You can be secure in the knowledge that the District is, and has been for its entire 56-year existence, fiscally sound, stable, and healthy — we're here for you today, and we'll be here for the future.



**“As a homeowner in Aptos, I gained an appreciation for how the District is getting such a big bang for the buck from the fees that we are charged for water.”**

*~ District Water Wise Academy Participant*

### **Selected Finance and Customer Service accomplishments:**

- » Produced a balanced budget, reflecting the District's prudent and sensible approach to finances for both ongoing operations and future projects
- » Responded to approximately 100,000 phone calls to the customer service desk
- » Received the Special District Leadership Foundation Transparency Certificate in recognition of outstanding transparency and good governance (learn more about District transparency at [soquelcreekwater.org/transparency-center](http://soquelcreekwater.org/transparency-center))
- » Saved ratepayer funds by obtaining tens-of-millions of dollars in grants and low interest loans for the Pure Water Soquel project





**“I know I can always count on reliable water service. It’s humbling to think about all of the people and facilities, the monitoring, and the testing that goes on every day – just so I can open a valve and fill a glass with water, or water my garden.”**

*~ District Water Wise Academy Participant*

Our work to provide the community with water services continues 24-7-365. Rain or shine. Pandemic or not. It’s our core service, our reason for existence. Our crews are in the field making repairs, installing new systems, and maintaining the entire infrastructure, and ensuring high-quality, safe drinking water.

We know you trust us to make sure you and your family have reliable water service, and we don’t take that trust for granted. Our goal is to continue earning it every day.

**Selected Operations & Maintenance accomplishments:**

- » Produced, treated, and delivered approximately 1.05 billion gallons of drinking water
- » Performed over 26,000 water quality tests, testing for over 180 compounds
- » Replaced 148 feet of water main pipeline, as part of ongoing work to replace aging infrastructure
- » Repaired 14 water main leaks

Our Engineering staff is responsible for the technical effectiveness of our day-to-day operations to efficiently deliver water to the community, manage our groundwater, enhance water supply reliability, and develop projects like Pure Water Soquel.

Based on our track record of success in these and other areas, you can have confidence in the work of our Engineering staff, knowing that when you turn on the tap or flush your toilet, the water flows.

#### Selected Engineering accomplishments:

- » Coordinated with Operations & Maintenance to initiate City of Santa Cruz surface water purchase and successful transfer of water to District customers, including a water quality sampling program
- » Completed construction of the Granite Way well in Aptos
- » Completed construction oversight for a water main relocation at Capitola Library
- » Administered 60 installations of water meters — seven in commercial buildings, 29 in residential buildings, and 24 fire service meters



**“Any water customer, curious or not, would be completely surprised to learn what it really takes to deliver water to their home.”**

*~ District Water Wise Academy Participant*



# CONSERVATION

Our Water Conservation staff is dedicated to one thing: helping you to use water as efficiently as possible. From rebates for water-efficient fixtures and turf replacements, to installation of state-of-the-art intelligent meters (i-Meters), they're focused on saving water, every day. And it's working — our community is doing a remarkable job at water conservation. A new online portal that works with the i-Meters will be available this fall where customers can see their hourly, daily, and monthly water usage.

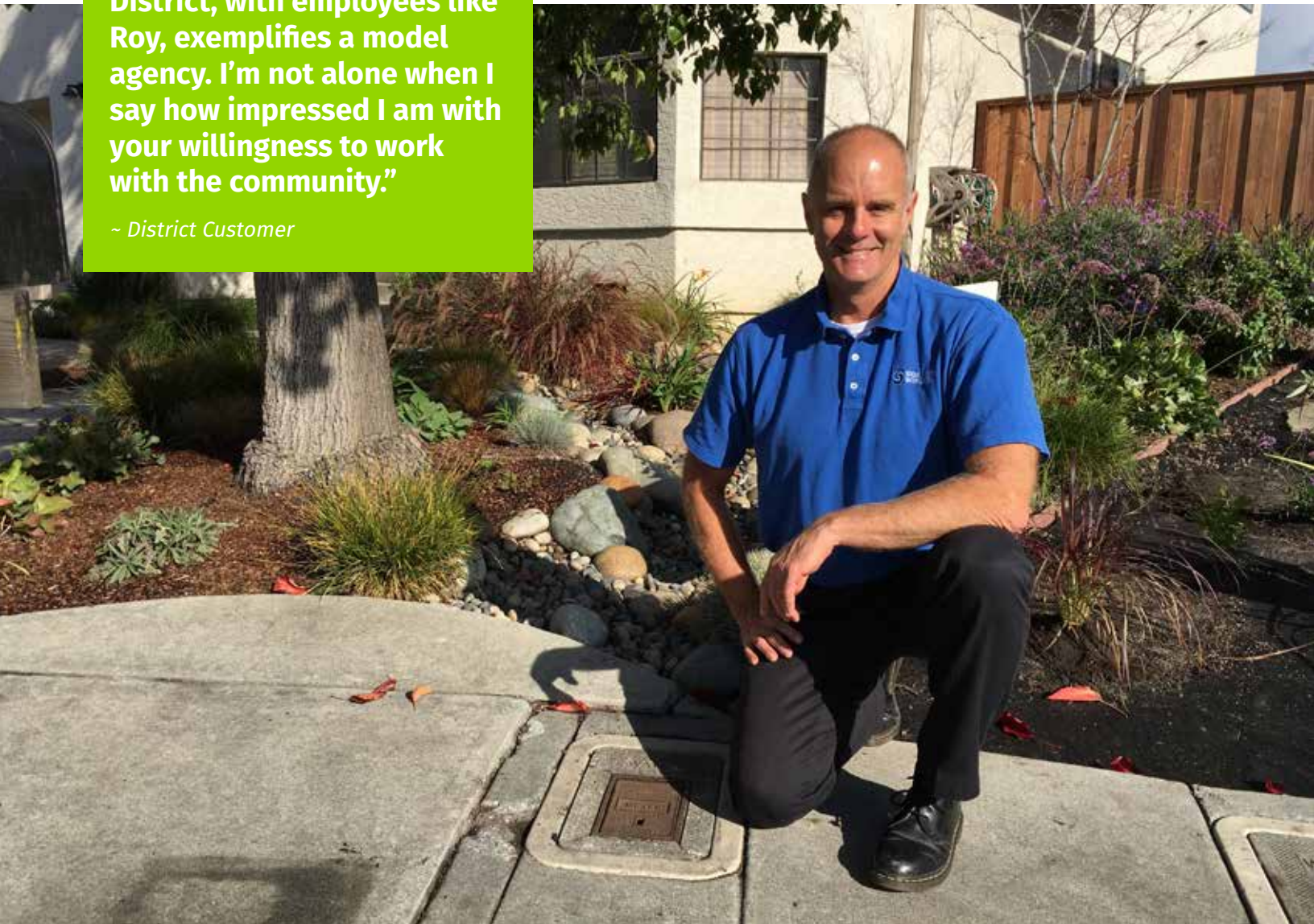
Our staff is a reliable partner in your everyday water conservation — a partnership that is playing a big role in helping to protect our groundwater supply.

## Selected Water Conservation accomplishments:

- » Provided over 750 rebates to help customers install water-saving fixtures, ultra-high efficiency toilets, and turf replacements, resulting in estimated water savings of nearly 1 million gallons per year
- » Completed an important study determining the feasibility and estimated costs of designing stormwater capture wells at several Seascape Golf Club locations
- » Installed approximately 11,000 i-Meters, reaching an installation rate of 70% (of about 15,500 in total to be installed)
- » Followed-up with customers on approximately 1,500 leaks detected by the District's metering system and/or field staff

» **“When it comes to helping people save water, the District, with employees like Roy, exemplifies a model agency. I’m not alone when I say how impressed I am with your willingness to work with the community.”**

*~ District Customer*





Special Projects staff supports certain critical projects — such as Pure Water Soquel — overseeing project planning, permits, financials/grants, and more. Our Communications staff focuses on connecting with the community members and sharing information on the District’s programs, projects, and activities.

The work in both of these functions centers on supporting the District’s guiding principles of incorporating community engagement and carrying out essential projects to ensure we can provide you — our community — a reliable water supply for current and future generations.

### **Selected Special Projects/ Communications accomplishments:**

- » Conducted 15 presentations on the District’s Community Water Plan
- » Conducted 22 water education classroom or assembly presentations at 13 schools (kindergarten to college)
- » Participated in 10 community events, and hosted over 400 people at the annual Water Harvest Festival, providing District and water resource information
- » Distributed multiple news releases, email blasts, newsletters, and articles, all aimed at informing the community about District activities



**“Thank you so much for creating this water education resource! I’m so glad to have the District as a real partner in a community where we all pitch in together.”**

*~ Science Teacher,  
Soquel High School*

# WHAT OUR COMMUNITY IS SAYING

In early 2020, the District conducted a statistically-valid phone and online survey of over 400 local customers, asking about perceptions of the District and the understanding of water supply issues faced by our community. The results help us to identify ways we can do a better job today, and how we can most effectively plan for the future.

The survey tells us that the community has a solid level of trust in the District. We will continue to earn your trust by listening to you, and carrying out our responsibilities and obligations thoughtfully and with a focus on our customers.

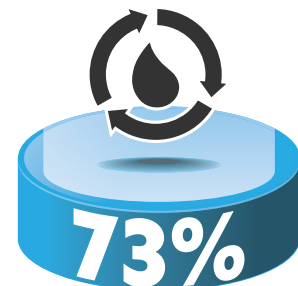
## Selected 2020 Community Survey results:



support **investment in infrastructure** to ensure a safe, reliable water supply



support taking **strong action now** to address the issues of over-drafting and seawater contamination



are **comfortable** with Pure Water Soquel



“Water purification technology has been proven safe in other places over many years, so I can see that process helping prevent saltwater contamination in our local water supply.”

~ Community Survey Respondent





»→ ALL THE WATER ←«  
*that will ever be,*  
**IS RIGHT NOW.**

National Geographic

**#InThisTogether**

To:

printed on 100% recycled paper 

**#InThisTogether**

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