

What's On Tap



AT THE SOQUEL CREEK WATER DISTRICT

COVID-19: Three Important Points to Reassure Our Customers During this Pandemic

Water is vital to protecting public health and safety, and Soquel Creek Water District is committed to keeping the water safe and flowing to the customers we serve. The Covid-19 pandemic continues to be an evolving situation for our community and around the world. We want to reassure our customers with these three vital points during this pandemic:

1. Your Drinking Water is Safe. The water from your tap is safe from coronavirus (COVID-19). The groundwater is regularly tested for pathogens including viruses to ensure that it meets all the stringent state and federal

drinking water requirements, which include eliminating pathogens, including viruses. The 2019 Water Quality Report details this information and is available at soquelcreekwater.org/waterqualityreports/2019wqr.pdf

2. No One's Water Will Be Shut Off. To ease the stress of this rapidly changing situation, water service will not be terminated for nonpayment of your bill due to financial difficulty directly resulting from the COVID-19 crisis and will not be charged late fees.

Continued on page 4

What do Overdraft, Seawater Intrusion, and Sustainability Mean?

WHAT IS OVERDRAFT?

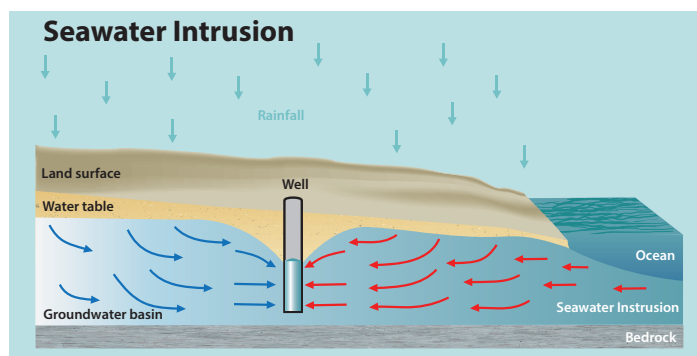
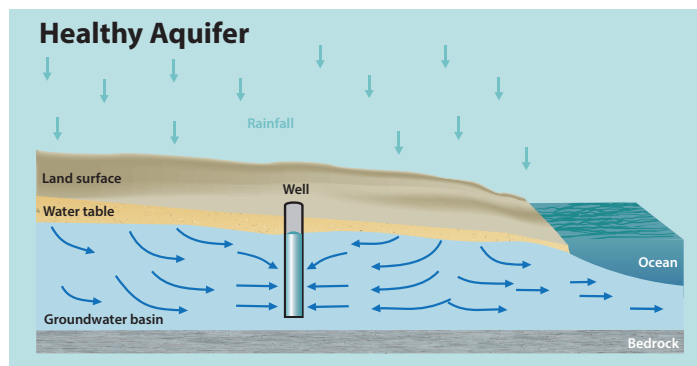
More water has been pumped out of the ground than has been naturally replenished with rainfall. The state identified our groundwater basin as one of 21 basins in the state as critically overdrafted, with a mandate to bring the basin back into sustainability by 2040.

WHAT IS SEAWATER INTRUSION?

Before you can understand seawater intrusion, you need to know what a healthy aquifer looks like. Shown to the right, you can see that rain naturally replenishes the water pumped out of the basin, and groundwater levels are maintaining a barrier to keep saltwater from coming inland.

Seawater intrusion occurs when groundwater is withdrawn at a faster rate than it can be replenished, and the groundwater levels become low. This allows ocean water to move into the freshwater aquifers. This condition can be irreversible and can result in abandoning wells or requiring costly treatment. You can see in the diagram to the right that the water level has dropped compared to the healthy aquifer diagram.

Continued on page 2



Watch our video about seawater intrusion to learn more at vimeo.com/180918900.

Overdraft Cont.

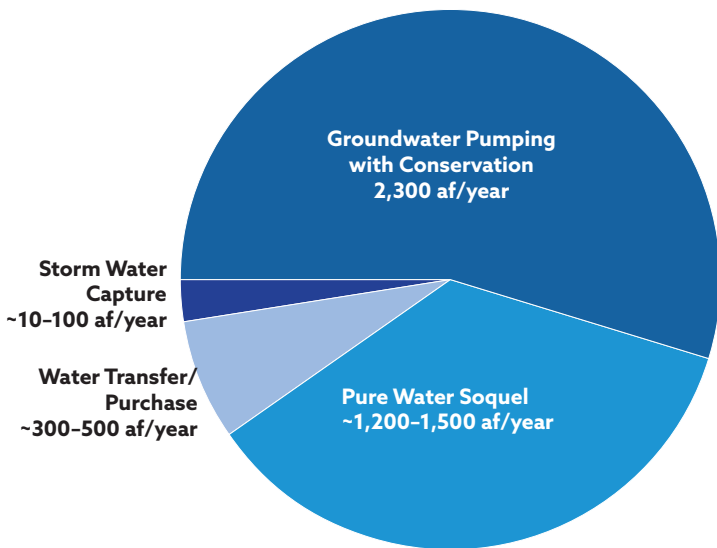
WHAT IS WATER SUSTAINABILITY?

We must meet the water needs of customers today and do so without compromising future generations' ability to do the same. This means we need to have effective and holistic management of our water resources, our aquifers, and the environment it is a part of. For our basin to be sustainable, the amount of water pumped out of the ground must be limited to prevent seawater intrusion and allow for a consistent supply.

WHAT IS THE DISTRICT DOING TO SOLVE THESE CHALLENGES?

In December 2018, the District Board certified a project-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and approved Pure Water Soquel (PWS) to move forward with design and permitting as the primary project from the Community Water Plan to solve our challenges.

PWS will reduce ocean discharge and increase water recycling at the Santa Cruz Wastewater Treatment Facility. The recycled water will then be purified at a water purification treatment facility on the corner of Soquel and Chanticleer Avenues. The purified recycled water will be used to create a seawater intrusion barrier, replenish the groundwater basin, and allow us to reduce pumping at wells near the coast.



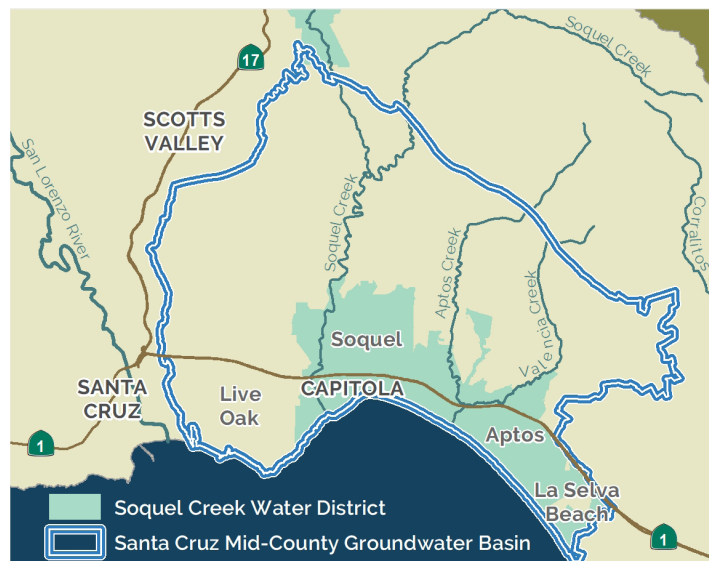
Get to Know the District

Periodically we like to educate our customers about the District, the water we serve, the challenges we face, and how we get water to you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We have new customers signing up all the time, and it's been a while since we did a *Water District 101*. So it here goes. We hope you find this informative and helpful!

WHERE DOES YOUR WATER COME FROM?

Unlike other areas in California that receive imported water from the Sierras or through the California Aqueduct System, all of our water is local and underground, in the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin. That's right: 100% of the water in our area comes from groundwater. The Basin includes two primary aquifers: the Purisima Aquifer Formation and the Aromas Red Sands Aquifer.

The Purisima Formation, providing two-thirds of the District's annual water production, supplies Capitola, Soquel, and Aptos. The Aromas Red Sands Aquifer provides the remaining one-third of our production, which supplies the communities of Seascape, Rio Del Mar, and La Selva Beach. The District, the City of Santa Cruz, Central Water District, small mutual water companies, and thousands of private-well owners, share the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin. *Continued on page 4*



The Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin and Soquel Creek Water District boundaries are depicted in this map.

New Water Use Monitoring Tool for Customers Will Help Save Water and Money Coming this Fall

District customers who want to keep a close eye on their water use and water bills will have a new tool at their fingertips come September 2020: the WaterSmart Customer Portal.

The WaterSmart Customer Portal is a user-friendly, self-service web portal that will give customers the ability to:

- See their hourly, daily, and monthly water usage.
- Get alerts about potential leaks via email, text, and phone.
- Set customized water use and bill amount thresholds and receive alerts when the use or bill amount reaches the limits.
- Find and fix leaks and report back to the District the type of leak found and when it was fixed.
- Identify water-saving opportunities.
- Access conservation resources such as water-wise landscaping ideas.
- Apply for conservation rebates.

The WaterSmart Customer Portal is part of the District's ongoing water meter system upgrade to an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). New digital components are being installed in your water meter, which will give them the increased capability to collect hourly water use and leak information and



transmit it electronically to the District. This metering system upgrade is ongoing, and we expect most of the District's 16,000 meters to be AMI by the end of this summer.

AMI and the WaterSmart Customer Portal are powerful technologies for water conservation and water resource management. These tools will help the District and our customers keep water use at efficient levels. At the same time, we continue to develop additional water supplies to restore our groundwater basin to sustainable levels and eliminate seawater intrusion.

We look forward to providing you with these new technologies. If you would like to learn more about the AMI project, please visit soquelcreekwater.org/AMI.

QUESTION CORNER

How is the District conducting Board business during the stay-at-home order? We have moved our Board meetings to an online Zoom video conferencing format. The meeting link is unique to each meeting and can be found on the agenda. To participate, listen in, and download agendas, visit soquelcreekwater.org/who-we-are/board-meetings-standing-committees. Meetings are being recorded and posted on our website about one week after the meeting.

Soquel Creek Water District is a Special District. What does that mean? Special Districts are local government agencies and not-for-profit that provide essential services to millions of Californians. They are

formed and governed by local residents to establish or enhance essential services and infrastructure in their communities. Special Districts are directly accountable to their voters and ratepayers through:

- Boards that are elected directly by the districts' voters.
- Requirements to submit annual financial and compensation reports to the State Controller.
- Meeting special district requirements mandated by state laws about public meetings, bonded debt, record keeping, and elections.

COVID-19 cont.

Customers who are facing hardships should contact us at 831-475-8500 option 3 to make payment arrangements. These temporary policies will remain in effect until further notice. Customers are still responsible for their water bills, and once the current public health crisis has passed, normal policies will be restored. For those who can continue with their prompt payments, it is greatly appreciated and helpful during this time.

3. We're maintaining social distancing while still providing water service 24/7. To comply with state and county "stay-at-home" orders, our office is closed to public access until further notice. We take this issue very seriously and want to make sure we are taking every precaution to protect our employees and the community from exposure to the virus. While our office is closed to in-person assistance, District employees are still working in a safe manner and ready to respond to inquiries, issues, and emergencies by email and

District cont.

HOW DOES THAT WATER GET TO YOU?

We operate 15 active production wells that extract approximately 3,300 acre-feet of water annually, which is equal to about one billion gallons of water. (One acre-foot of water equals 325,851 gallons and is enough water to cover a football field one foot deep). That water is pumped from underground and then treated. It then goes into our distribution system that consists of 173 miles of pipelines and 18 storage tanks. We have about 100 pumps, over 5,000 valves, 14 booster stations, and eight pressure zones.

MONITORING OUR WATER

Since 1981, we have maintained an extensive monitoring and management program to help define and understand our underlying groundwater resources. Over 80 monitoring wells in 25 different locations monitor water quality and groundwater levels in the Basin. Chlorides, general minerals, total dissolved solids, and static water levels (as an early warning of the threat of saltwater intrusion) are all measured and monitored at our wells.

phone. There are multiple ways to pay your bill:

Online - Visit municipalonlinepayments.com/soquelcreekwaterdistrictca

Phone - Call (831) 475-8500, option 2, to access our automated system or choose option 3 to speak to billing representative directly during normal business hours (8 am - 5 pm).

Drop Box - The District offers two drop box locations at our office at 5180 Soquel Drive, one near the front entrance and one in the parking lot behind the office.

Under normal circumstances, we love to talk with our customers when we're in the field! But, these aren't normal circumstances. If you must interact with one of our field staff, we ask that you, please keep a distance of at least six feet. Thank you for doing your part to help keep our essential workers healthy and protect your own health as well.

WHO DO WE SERVE?

Our system serves approximately 40,400 residents, through about 15,800 connections. The District's water service is 80% residential (single-family and multi-family), and 20% non-residential (commercial, industrial, schools, governmental, landscape irrigation). We do not have any agricultural accounts.

E-Blast Contest Winner

Congratulations to Dian Duchin Reed for winning our "Name the E-blast" Contest. We had over 40 entries and were excited to roll out the new name and tag line in the April edition:

QuickSips
NEWS TO HYDRATE YOUR MIND

Thank you all so much for participating!

Sign up for QuickSips on the front page of our website at soquelcreekwater.org.



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Other ways to connect with us!

