

Santa Ynez River

WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER

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Protecting Your Water Rights

The Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District (SYRWCD) was formed in 1939 in response to a third new large dam on the Santa Ynez River designed to store and divert flow out of the river to the communities of the south coast. At that time users of the river were concerned about preserving and protecting the historic and potential future uses of water within the watershed.

Since 1939 and continuing today, the SYRWCD advocates for and is an active protector of your water rights in the Santa Ynez and Lompoc Valleys.

Managing Water Supplies for User Benefit

Cachuma Reservoir last spilled in 2011. During spill years, groundwater aquifers along the river are recharged, including the Lompoc Plain. During dry periods, such as the 9 years since 2011, the SYRWCD makes releases of stored water from the reservoir that are earmarked for water users below Bradbury Dam. During this extended dry year period, releases to the river have occurred every summer since 2013, with the exception of 2019. With river aquifers still at low levels due to prolonged dry conditions, the SYRWCD called for a water-rights release from the Lake Cachuma Reservoir starting on August 31, 2020. A total of 10,478 acre-feet was released.

Groundwater Charge Rates

At the June 2020 meeting, the Board of Directors voted to maintain the same groundwater charge rates for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Final Water Rights Order

The State of California Water Resources Control Board (State Board) has adopted changes to the permits granted to the United States Bureau of Reclamation which allow for the diversion of water from the Santa Ynez River out of the basin. These permits also protect downstream users of groundwater and surface water. The changes to the permit require that significantly more water is released to promote recovery of the endangered sea-going Rainbow Trout, also known as Steelhead. The SYRWCD is involved in this process and will continue to be involved in the future to ensure that downstream water rights are not infringed upon.

Beneficial Use and Users of Water

The State Board is required to balance the competing interests of water for fish and water for people. The SYRWCD continues the cooperative effort with all State and Federal agencies to work toward a balance of water resource allocations for all use and users of water in the Basin.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is intended to be implemented at the most local level. Local governments and water agencies of medium priority basins such as the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin) are required to prepare a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) by January 30, 2022 to comply with SGMA's requirements. Eight local governmental agencies in the Basin formed three Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA's), one for each of three management areas. The GSAs meet quarterly (via video teleconference due to COVID-19). The three GSAs are currently working on sections of the GSP document, which are available for public review and input. In addition, each GSA has formed a Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) to provide focused public input. Public participation and input are encouraged and appreciated.

For more information about available documents for review, CAG meetings, on-going GSP activities and the SGMA process, please visit our SGMA website SantaYnezWater.org or call Bill Buelow at the District office at 805-693-1156.

Office Location

Our office is located at 3669 Sagunto Street, Suite 101, Santa Ynez, CA 93460.

Water users in the Santa Ynez - Solvang - Los Olivos area should not confuse this District with the Improvement District No. 1 (ID1) by the same name. ID1 is a separate District formed many years ago to acquire and serve water in the aforementioned area.

We appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have. If you have any questions regarding District activities, please contact Kevin Walsh, General Manager, at 805-693-1156.