

Santa Ynez River

WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

JANUARY 2022 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 10 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 2, 2021. A total of 4,649 acre-feet was released. This release was coordinated with downstream fishery flows in cooperation with other agencies.

Predictions for this winter indicate continued below normal rainfall. If this winter is dry, then it is likely a downstream release to the Lompoc plain will be made in summer of 2022.

Groundwater Charge Rates

At the June 2021 meeting, the Board of Directors voted to adopt a 3% increase in groundwater charge rates for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Regulatory Actions

The State of California Fish and Game Commission is considering a petition to declare sea-going trout, known as steelhead, as "endangered" under the California Endangered Species Act. The Act allows for increased regulation of not only water use, but land use and related activities. The steelhead fishery is already protected under the highly controlling National Endangered Species Act. Further, the State Water Resources Control Board has recently issued a new Water Order that requires

significantly more water be released from Lake Cachuma to promote recovery of the fishery, as well as significantly increased monitoring, studies, and reporting. The SYRWCD is involved in the Fish and Game Commission process and is opposed to the petition as being duplicative, over-reaching, unnecessary, burdensome, and an infringement on downstream water rights.

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 beneficial 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. To comply with SGMA requirements, 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. Eight local governmental agencies in the Basin formed three Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA's), one for each of three management areas. In addition, each GSA has formed a Citizen Advisory Group to provide focused public input. The GSA Committees meet quarterly with video teleconference participation, due to COVID-19.

Public participation and input are encouraged and appreciated. The three GSAs will host public hearings to consider adoption of the three GSPs during the first week of January 2022 .

For more information, please visit SantaYnezWater.org or call 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.