



# Sausalito-Marin City Sanitary District

## Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029

Adopted by Board Action  
June 4, 2024



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## **General Manager**

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# District Message

On behalf of the Sausalito-Marín City Sanitary District Board of Directors and its Staff, we are pleased to present the District's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan. This plan is the result of an annual review and update of the District Strategic Plan in an effort to plan for the existing District business environment while looking toward the future. The adoption of this plan indicates the importance the District, its Board of Directors, and employees place on seeking continuous improvements in every aspect of the District. The FY 2024-25 plan serves as the framework for decision making over a five-year period. The District reviews and updates the plan annually and always welcomes comments and feedback from its stakeholders, staff, Board of Directors and other interested parties.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Kingston  
General Manager

# INTRODUCTION

## Strategic Plan

### 2024 - 2029

## District Overview

The Sausalito-Marín City Sanitary District (SMCSD) is governed by an elected five-member Board of Directors and provides wastewater conveyance and treatment service to the City of Sausalito and wastewater collection, conveyance and treatment service to unincorporated areas within the District's boundaries including Marin City. Wastewater conveyance and treatment service is also provided on a contract basis to Tamalpais Community Services District (TCSD) (which includes Muir Woods National Monument) and to the National Park Service (NPS) (Forts Baker, Barry and Cronkhite, Marine Mammal Center and Cavallo Point Resort). The District operates and maintains a complex infrastructure system, thereby protecting our community's public health, the environment and San Francisco Bay. It serves approximately 10,000 Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs) and a population of approximately 18,000. Based upon a comprehensive financial plan, the District adopted a 5-year sewer rate plan on May 7, 2024 to properly fund operations and capital improvements.

## Mission / Vision

Providing wastewater collection, conveyance and treatment services for our communities thereby protecting public health, the environment and the Bay.

# Core Values

Recognizing that wastewater treatment is a vital component of protecting public health, the environment and the Bay, SMCSO will:

- Meet all regulatory requirements;
- Safely operate an effective wastewater system;
- Maintain an efficient wastewater system;
- Provide sustainable services for our community;
- Be responsible to ratepayers by managing the District efficiently;
- Value staff by providing a high-quality and safe work place fostering professional growth, teamwork, and job satisfaction; and
- Promote public participation, education and understanding of the services we provide.
- Continuously plan for the future to maintain reliable and cost-effective service.

# PLAN DEVELOPMENT

## Strategic Plan Update

### 2024-2029

## Purpose of the Plan

A strategic plan is a top-level planning document the organization uses to set clear direction over all operational aspects of its mission. Upon adoption, it serves as a framework for decision making over a five-year period. It is a disciplined effort to guide fundamental decisions that shape what the District plans to accomplish by selecting a rational course of action. This plan update incorporates an assessment of the District's present state and requires gathering and analyzing information; institutes goal setting; and assists with making decisions for the future. Input was gathered from relevant sources to ensure accuracy and this plan seeks to strengthen and build upon opportunities while addressing areas of concern.

This Plan also identifies actions, activities, and planning efforts that are currently active and needed for continued success in operations and management of the District and provides for an annual review and update process.

## Organizational Environment

### OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

The District operates and maintains, on behalf of the community and ratepayers, a wastewater treatment plant designed to fully treat wastewater under: Primary (I), Secondary (II) and Tertiary (III) treatment levels up to 1.8 million gallons per day (MGD) during average dry weather flow.

During wet weather flow, the plant is designed to hydraulically handle up to 12 MGD and is capable of treating up to 9 MGD of full secondary treatment and up to 6 MGD of tertiary treatment. The conveyance system consists of eleven sewage pump stations, and approximately eleven miles of pipelines. The District owns and operates 7 pump stations and operates and maintains, under a service agreement, 4 pump stations on behalf of the City of Sausalito. The District's treatment plant site is located in Fort Baker with a property lease through 2049 with the National Park Service.

## **CAPITAL**

The District maintains an ongoing 5-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) which is updated annually by staff, the Capital Projects Committee and the Board of Directors. Projects are developed to address aging infrastructure, changing regulatory requirements and to improve operational efficiencies. Projects are then prioritized for operator safety, system reliability and return on investment. All projects included in the current CIP are rate funded through sewer service fees.

The District recently completed several key projects which improve overall system reliability, capacity and safety. These include the following:

- The Wet Weather Flow Upgrade Project has been completed and addresses new discharge regulations, manages peak wet weather flows, and improves treatment plant performance and reliability. Secondary treatment capacity was increased from 6 MGD to 9 MGD to significantly reduce blending events and tertiary treatment capacity was increased from 1 MGD to 6 MGD. In addition, a 600,000-gallon storage basin was constructed to trim flow during peak storm events.
- The Coloma Street Pump Station Replacement Project has been completed which increases firm capacity of the District's gravity interceptor by 4.2 MGD at a critical point in the conveyance system to mitigate potential sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) during peak storm events.
- The Generator Reliability Improvements Project has been completed which improves overall system reliability and capacity during power outages. This project also reduces emergency callouts and the need to mobilize portable equipment in preparation for storms and/or planned power outages.

- The existing Operations Building has been remodeled to expand and improve the space needed for an upgraded lab and new control room office. The new lab was designed to support increasing regulatory requirements and improve safety. In addition, the operators' locker room and break room have been relocated outside the treatment plant operations area.

Additional projects continue to be added to the District's CIP to further incorporate efficiency, safety and redundancy at all major conveyance and treatment facilities. These projects, which are currently in the construction phase, include rehabilitation of the treatment plant's existing clarifier, electrical upgrades to the plant, and rehabilitation of the conveyance system's Beach Force Main. The existing clarifier, which has been in consistent use since its construction in 1953, requires a complete replacement of its collector mechanism and improvements to odor control. The Beach Force Main Rehabilitation Project will allow critical force main redundancy with the Alexander Avenue force main which conveys wastewater from the Main Street pump station to the treatment plant. Rehabilitation of the Beach Force Main will also allow for force main inspections and reduce energy costs at the Main Street pump station.

## **ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE**

The District continues to plan finances with short term accountability and a long-range outlook. It completed a five-year rate study and adopted new sewer service rates for FY 2024/2025 to 2028/2029 through the Proposition 218 process to ensure adequate revenue is available to support operation and capital costs and be equitable for all of our customers. In addition, the District continues to work with the City of Sausalito on implementing a new services agreement.

A fully funded reserve policy, solid bond ratings and strong cash position creates a positive outlook for the District. Due to a fully funded reserve and strong financial position, the District continues to address the pension and medical liabilities with the implementation of the CEPPT and CERBT trusts. In addition, the pension and medical liabilities have been added to the Reserve Policy and will be partially rate funded as these amounts were included in the rate study.

The District continues to monitor and optimize its investments between Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF) and United States Treasuries. For a better return on investment due to

changing interest rates and the availability of higher low risk returns, a portion of reserve funds are in LAIF and U.S. Treasuries.

The Audit for year ending June 30, 2023 was successfully completed with the auditor reporting no findings and no modifications. A complete copy of the 2023 Audit may be found on the District website. After 10 years with the same auditor, Chavan & Associates, the District felt it was their fiduciary responsibility to ratepayers to change. After completing a Request for Proposals and interviewing various firms, the District will be utilizing Nigro & Nigro for FY 2024-2026 audits.

## Challenges and Opportunities

The District continues to be challenged with many significant future operational and capital needs driven by the everchanging regulatory requirements. These challenges will need advanced planning of external and internal resources to ensure the organization is prepared. Some of the known and anticipated challenges and opportunities are described in the following:

**Reliable System Operations** – Priority projects to further improve system safety, reliability, regulatory compliance and efficiency include but are not limited to:

- Replacement of the primary digester heating system to improve sludge digestive efficiency. In addition, the secondary heating system integrates into the primary heating system to provide redundancy and improve system performance.
- Rehabilitation and relocation of the treatment plant's screw press improves biosolids handling reliability and operator safety. This project reduces operator time in processing biosolids.
- Replacement of the District's Marin City Pump Station improves collection system reliability and operator safety. The new station eliminates confined entry and improves reliability through the implementation of submersible pumps.
- Rehabilitation (Phase 2) of the District's unincorporated area collection system targets reduction to Inflow & Infiltration (I&I) and includes a complete system assessment for long term reliability.

Additional challenges include continuing to reduce impacts to the community from odors, further improving site access and safety and investigating sources of I/I.

The effective execution of our Capital Improvement Plan remains critical for reliable system operations, meeting regulatory requirements and protecting public health and the Bay.

**Technology** – The District is continuously looking for ways to improve or update existing technology. It uses modern technology infrastructure to monitor and control the wastewater conveyance and treatment system. This requires continuous monitoring of the system during and after work hours, through normal and extreme weather, on a year-round basis. Reliable modern technology is a key component to the success of the District.

- Programmable logic controllers (PLC) are used to operate each individual process throughout the plant. Data available from the PLC is transmitted to a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. SCADA is a computer-based system used for gathering and analyzing real time data to monitor and control critical treatment plant and remote pump station processes. SCADA data is used for regulatory reporting and validating system compliance.
- A SCADA system is critical for District operations and regulatory compliance. Important features include redundant data storage, real time remote access on any platform or device, automatic report generation to meet regulatory requirements, and automatic data collection. District staff is currently working to upgrade the District's SCADA system. Challenges to upgrade the system include purchase price, long term operational cost, software features, report generation, data storage, built in redundancy and technical support.
- Remote pump stations communicate through ethernet radios to send data to the SCADA system for use in monitoring, operating and reporting.
- The District uses a local file server to facilitate storage and collaborative work with electronic documents and resources. A combination of fiber optic and ethernet connections are utilized for data communications and internet access throughout the plant.
- A Wi-Fi system is installed at the treatment plant to maintain connectivity of devices throughout the site. This system provides wireless connectivity to the

network-based resources, the email system, as well as an auxiliary connection for mobile telephone communication.

- Data integrity is achieved through both onsite and offsite electronic file storage for critical resources. SCADA program backups and file server backups are performed regularly to maintain continuity of service. Firewalls and password protected devices help protect the district from cyber-attacks. Critical resources, including the SCADA system, are placed on a separate computer network which is not connected to the internet to provide an additional layer of security from cyber-attacks. To protect systems, networks and programs from digital attack the District implements Cybersecurity assessments.
- The District evaluates software expenses for all programs as the majority of these have changed to subscription-based services requiring annual fees.

**Environmental Regulations** – The regulations governing District operations related to water quality, air and solid waste disposal continue to evolve. The District operates under requirements from Federal, State and Local Agencies including:

- A National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit to discharge disinfected plant effluent to the San Francisco Bay. This permit was renewed in early 2024 and will expire in 2029.
- Nutrient Watershed Permit
  - The third nutrient watershed permit is expected to be adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) in 2024. This updated permit will require the district to reduce dry season total inorganic nitrogen loads in the final effluent by 40% as compared to measurements taken in 2022. For the first time in the history of the nutrient watershed permit, numerical limits will be imposed. During a 10-year implementation cycle, the limit will be 180 kilograms per day (kg/day) and afterwards the limit will be 69 kg/day. In the short term, operations staff will need to develop an operational plan to comply with the first numerical limit in the permit. Long term, the District will need to implement modifications to existing treatment processes and/or explore the addition of new treatment processes to meet the 40 percent reduction. Additional testing of ammonia and nitrate-nitrite will be needed to monitor compliance with these limits.

- Chlorine Amendment
  - On November 8, 2023, the San Francisco Bay Regional Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) adopted Order R2-2023-00231, *Amendment of Waste Discharge Requirements for Municipal Dischargers to Update Total Residual Chlorine and Oil and Grease Requirements*. The order amended municipal wastewater dischargers' individual NPDES permits to update effluent limits and monitoring requirements for total residual chlorine. Previously, dischargers that used chlorine for disinfection were subject to a technology-based effluent limit for total residual chlorine set as an instantaneous maximum of 0.0 mg/L. Under the new requirements, dischargers will be subject to a water quality-based effluent limit implemented as a one-hour average. New limits vary by discharger depending on receiving water salinity and dilution factor. Continuous monitoring is required.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
  - Discharge monitoring reports (DMR)
  - Compliance orders
  - Biosolids reports
- State of California Water Resources and Control Board
  - Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) reports
  - Self-monitoring reports (SMR) of treated effluent
- California Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program
  - Ongoing accreditation of the laboratory, 2-year certification renewed in March 2024
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD)
  - Limits on Hydrogen Sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) emissions
  - Stationary backup generator emissions and operating compliance
  - Portable generator emissions compliance
  - Vehicle fleet emissions compliance (off road and on road)
- County of Marin Hazardous Materials & Waste regulations
  - Disposal of hazardous items and waste materials

These challenges will drive our capital planning and allow for targeted investment in effective future facilities.

**City Sewer System Service Agreement** – Amend the services agreement between the District and City of Sausalito to operate and maintain the City’s assets.

**Reduce System Infiltration and Inflow (I&I)** – Aging infrastructure contributes to infiltration and inflow of ground water, especially during major storm events. Continued public and private investments to repair both sewer lines and private laterals is necessary to reduce system I&I. Primary challenges to reduce or eliminate I&I in order to achieve a “closed system” include: aging pipes and private laterals which are susceptible to failure, salt water intrusion from high tides, illegal pumping of storm water into the sewer system and ground settlement or subsidence which causes pipe failures. All of these factors add unnecessary flow into the system at a rate more than 10 times the dry weather flow leading to increased operation and maintenance costs.

The District proactively maintains, repairs and evaluates its collection system on regular intervals. Plans are scheduled, as part of the CIP, to continue to evaluate and determine the locations to improve collection system piping and pump stations to reduce the effect of I&I. While District facilities are substantially sealed, several other agencies deliver flow to the District including the City of Sausalito, the Tamalpais Community Services District and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). The District continues to monitor flows received during large storms and works with all partnering agencies to reduce I/I delivered to the District's system. A primary cause of I/I is experienced from private laterals due to age, tree roots and land settlement. The District communicates, advises and provides grant funding for private owners to assist them with sewer system upgrades to reduce seawater and stormwater infiltration. Our projects are also designed for changing code and requirements to plan for sea level rise, storm surge and new environmental conditions due to climate change.

**Water Quality Monitoring/Assurance** – The District maintains a certified laboratory staffed by trained and certified personnel. The laboratory performs analysis for a majority of the conventional pollutants specified in the NPDES permit and contracts with

commercial laboratories to perform analyses which are not cost effective to self-perform. In calendar year 2023, the laboratory performed 1,936 discrete measurements for both regulatory reporting and process control purposes. Changes to the California Code of Regulations pertaining to environmental laboratory accreditation went into effect at the beginning of 2024. The laboratory renewed its accreditation to these new standards in February 2024. These new regulations are based on the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) document on laboratory accreditation, ISO 17025. In order to maintain reliable laboratory service under the new regulations, fulfill the compliance monitoring requirements, and provide the process control data to inform operational decisions on plant operations, the District will need to increase the number of hours allocated to laboratory services and increase the number of personnel with at least a Grade II laboratory certification. A high performing laboratory is a required mission critical function of the District.

**Workforce** – The District needs a high-performing team to make all of the system’s components work well. The District annually reviews its organization structure making changes where necessary to assure proper staffing levels reflecting the changing environment and regulatory needs of our agency. The District continues to have qualified leadership and personnel to ensure the effective operation of our system. With an upgraded plant and system, there is an opportunity to review staffing levels, job classifications and our organization which may include changing job classifications, internal promotion, external hiring and resuming the operator intern program. Our work schedules have been adjusted to ensure staffing levels are optimized to support staff’s work/life balance. The District’s pay and benefits; safety culture; and certification program continue to support a healthy and rewarding workplace environment, making the District an attractive employer. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Operating Engineers Local 3 (OE3) is currently being reviewed and updated following the expiration of the previous MOU.

**Public Outreach**– Opportunities and challenges always exist to keep our community, constituents and stakeholders informed regarding the District’s decision-making process, plans and operations. District information, activities and projects are published on our new website. This allows staff to utilize a new user-friendly platform providing transparency and accessibility. In addition to the website, public notices, letters, and electronic

newsletters are distributed through emailing and postings to public websites. The District participates in a regional approach to community/public education and outreach by working with a consortium of 6 wastewater treatment plants in Marin County. The District conducts tours of the treatment plant and the conveyance system for the community to educate and inform the public about the mission of the District.

**Emergency Operational Response** –In the event of an area-wide emergency, the District is connected to County and State notification services and responds by assessing and repairing damages to its own system first. If and when resources and staffing become available, the District responds and provides mutual aid to local agencies following mutual aid agreements. Responding to severe storms, power outages and government imposed pandemic controls continue to challenge the District’s limited resources.

# THE STRATEGIC PLAN

## Strategic Plan

### 2023-2028

## Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives have been established to identify what the organization needs to accomplish in the fulfillment of the stated District mission and values:

### **Goal 1            Protect Public Health and the Environment**

Objective 1.1 Optimize plant processes to enhance water quality discharged into the Bay.

Objective 1.2 Identify and reduce infiltration and inflow into the District's conveyance system.

Objective 1.3 Provide staff with information needed to communicate a clear and consistent message when approached by the public.

Objective 1.4 Work with the EPA and State Board to lift the 2007 EPA Treatment Plant Order.

Objective 1.5 Work with the EPA to lift the 2008 EPA Order.

### **Goal 2            Continuous Water Quality Improvement**

Objective 2.1 Continuously follow and exceed District's Regulatory requirements under: EPA, NPDES, SWRCB, BAAQMD and other agencies.

Objective 2.2 Understand the future impacts of regulatory requirements, the renewal of the NPDES permit, potential new discharge limits and timelines for implementation of solutions.

Objective 2.3 Continue to utilize and improve the District's asset management system to perform regular, proactive and timely maintenance activities to reduce process and equipment failure.

Objective 2.4 Evaluate new test methods and information technologies to improve the performance and capability of the laboratory in light of increasing regulatory requirements and standards.

Objective 2.5 Continuously improve plant operational strategies to enhance overall plant performance and water quality.

### **Goal 3**

#### **Efficient and Effective Implementation of the Capital Improvement Plan**

Objective 3.1 Continuously manage and prioritize a 1-Year Operations and Maintenance Plan.

Objective 3.2 Continuously update and prioritize the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan to maintain reliability, capacity and safety of the wastewater collections, conveyance and treatment systems.

Objective 3.3 Implement the Capital Improvement Plan efficiently by delivering projects on time and within budget based upon the specified scope of work.

Objective 3.4 Understand potential impacts to collection, conveyance and treatment systems from government mandated housing and future community housing needs.

Objective 3.5 Work with the community to understand potential growth impacts and impacts resulting from climate change and sea level rise.

Objective 3.6 Assess and address cyber security threats.

### **Goal 4**

#### **Develop High Performing Staff**

Objective 4.1 Continue to train and certify operations staff.

Objective 4.2 Maintain a highly skilled, multi-disciplined and efficient organization.

Objective 4.3 Continue a focused safety program to provide necessary equipment and training to maintain confident and skilled staff. To achieve a successful safety program the district uses a combination of online training and safety consulting services.

Objective 4.4 Maintain competitive staff compensation and benefits.

**Goal 5 Provide Financial Stability, Accountability and Value to Ratepayers**

Objective 5.1 Properly budget and fund the Operations and Maintenance functions.

Objective 5.2 Ensure adequate funding for Capital Projects.

Objective 5.3 Continue to work with the City of Sausalito to amend the service agreement.

Objective 5.4 Provide financial transparency with timely annual audits and meet government reporting requirements.

Objective 5.5 Continue to annually monitor unfunded pensions and benefit liabilities.

**Goal 6 Responsible Leadership & Management**

Objective 6.1 Engage constructively and proactively to create a collaborative and inclusive work environment.

Objective 6.2 Provide opportunity and support for staff growth and advancement through mentoring and professional development opportunities.

Objective 6.3 Enhance systems to improve plant operations, business practices and sharing of information.

Objective 6.4 Recognize and celebrate exceptional employee achievements and performance.

**Goal 7 Enhance Internal and External Communication**

Objective 7.1 Engage District staff for input on decisions, activities and initiatives in order to benefit from their knowledge of operations and potential consequences.

Objective 7.2 Inform our ratepayers and communities about District initiatives and projects.

Objective 7.3 Promote public awareness of industry issues and trends related to regulatory compliance.

Objective 7.4 Provide public education on wastewater processes and ways they can assist with preventing sewer overflows.

# Definitions & Acronyms

## Primary Treatment (I)

The wastewater treatment process that takes place in a rectangular or circular tank that allows solids in wastewater to settle or float and be separated from the wastewater.

## Secondary Treatment (II)

The wastewater treatment process converting dissolved or suspended materials into a form more readily separated from the water being treated. The process commonly is a type of biological treatment followed by secondary clarifiers that allow the solids to continue to settle out from the primary treated wastewater.

## Tertiary Treatment (III)

Any process of water renovation that upgrades treated wastewater to meet specific reuse requirements. May include general cleanup of water or removal of specific parts of wastes insufficiently removed by conventional treatment processed.

BAAQMD	Bay Area Air Quality Management District
CalPERS	California Public Employee's Retirement System
CEPPT	California Employers Pension Prefunding Trust
CERBT	California Employers Retirement Benefit Trust
CIP	Capital Improvement Plan
DMR	Discharge Monitoring Reports
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EDU	Equivalent Dwelling Unit
FFR	Fixed Film Reactor
GGNRA	Golden Gate National Recreation Area
H <sub>2</sub> S	Hydrogen Sulfide
I&I	Inflow & Infiltration
ISO	International Organization for Standardization

JPA	Joint Powers Authority
MGD	Million Gallons per Day
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPS	National Park Service
OE3	Operating Engineers Local 3
O&M	Operations & Maintenance
PEPRA	Public Employees' Pension Reform Act
PG&E	Pacific Gas & Electric
PLC	Programmable Logic Controller
PS	Pump Station
PSPS	Public Safety Power Shutoff
SCADA	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition
SMCSD	Sausalito-Marin City Sanitary District
SSO	Sanitary Sewer Overflow
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TCSD	Tamalpais Community Services District



FY 2024/2025  
Organizational Chart

