# Shasta County agrees to settlement for sewage spill and violations at Cottonwood Wastewater Treatment Plant

# Bulk of fine directed toward preventing future spills and effluent violations

**Nov. 20,2020 Contact: Clint Snyder**

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**SACRAMENTO** – The Shasta County Department of Public Works has agreed to a $517,760 fine to settle a case involving an overflow from their sanitary sewer collection system and violations of effluent limitations at their wastewater treatment plant.

The 465,227-gallon overflow occurred in early February of 2019 in an area known as Shasta County Service Area #17 (CSA #17). It was caused by pump failure at the collection system’s main lift station. The overflow occurred at both the main lift station and at an upstream manhole located adjacent to a stormwater drainage ditch which drains to Cottonwood Creek, a tributary of the Sacramento River.

Under the terms of the [settlement](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/tentative_orders/cottonwood/cottonwood_stip.pdf), the department will satisfy $60,000 of the liability by completing an Enhanced Compliance Action to replace a deficient pipeline and raise manholes in the CSA #17 that contribute infiltration and inflow to the sanitary sewer collection system; this will increase system capacity and reduce the likelihood of future sanitary sewer overflows.

Raw sewage contains pathogens, nitrogen, ammonia, and organic matter. When spilled into a creek, elevated levels of these constituents cause a human health risk and reduce dissolved oxygen levels in the water, which negatively impacts aquatic life.

Shasta County violated effluent limitations outlined in their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for pH, total coliform organisms, total chlorine residual and other disinfection byproducts, copper, zinc, biochemical oxygen demand, and ammonia from December 2013 through May 2020.

Under the terms of the settlement, county will satisfy $282,000 of the fine by retrofitting the existing filter at the wastewater treatment plant. This will help maximize the useful life of the treatment plant’s filter while minimizing future effluent limit violations.

Additionally, the county will pay $175,760 to the state’s Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account.

[The Central Valley Water Board](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/) is a state agency responsible for protecting water quality and ensuring beneficial uses such as aquatic habitat and human health for 11,350 miles of streams, 579,110 acres of lakes, and the largest contiguous groundwater basin in California. It is the largest of nine regional boards, encompassing 60,000 square miles, or about 40 percent of the state. Thirty-eight of 58 counties are either completely or partially within the Board's boundaries, formed by the crests of the Sierra Nevada on the east, the Coast Ranges and Klamath Mountains on the west, the Oregon border on the north, and the Tehachapi Mountains on the south.

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