



Frequently Asked Questions

San Lucas County Water District

Updated December 17, 2024

Background

State and local agencies are working together diligently to resolve ongoing water quality issues with the San Lucas County Water District. The purpose of this document is to answer questions and respond to public comments received following the August 28, 2024, community meeting and draft Engineering Report. This document is separated into the following topics: **Rates, Costs, & Funding**; **Timeline**; **Drinking Water**; and **General**.

As this document is meant to address questions from the August meeting, it does not include updates on developments since that time. This document will be updated to reflect any new information from the final Engineering Report to be released in early 2025.

Rates, Costs, and Funding

- 1. Will a rate study be conducted for any of the options, to determine what resident rates will be? When will that be conducted? Will residents have any idea of what the long-term rates will be before the project option is chosen?**

A rate study will be completed after a final long-term solution project is selected by the San Lucas County Water District. This will be conducted as part of the project planning phase, before project construction begins.



2. Does the table of “Estimated Costs of Alternatives” in the San Lucas Water Systems Improvement Engineering Report (Engineering Report) include the total billing cost to a consumer?

No. The draft Engineering Report gives rough estimates of monthly costs to ratepayers to show the potential difference in costs for each project alternative. Once a final long-term solution project is selected, a rate study will be conducted to determine total billing cost to each service connection.

3. Do funding options that will be utilized for this project include the cost to connect the houses from the house to the main pipeline in the street, if a new connection is required? If not, who will pay for that?

New pipes connecting homes to the main water system (or “service lateral connections”) are not expected to be required by any of the proposed project “alternatives” listed in the draft Engineering Report. Therefore, these connection costs are not an issue.

4. Some project alternative costs predict that water charges can exceed \$220 per month. Will low-income rate payers be eligible for these costs/charges to be covered either: (i) in part; or (ii) in full?

The estimated water charges from the draft Engineering Report and the actual amount households will be billed are separate and distinct. Only a full rate study can provide residents in San Lucas with direct information about their future water bills.

The draft Engineering Report gives rough estimates of monthly costs to ratepayers to show the potential difference in costs for each project alternative. Those estimates do not include other potential funding sources such as grant funding and/or contributions from the Responsible Parties. Once a final long-term solution project is selected, a rate study will be conducted to determine total billing cost to each service connection.



Regarding assistance for low-income rate payers, the San Lucas County Water District does not currently have a low-income rate program. However, the water district could include one in a future rebate study and rate design, if it chooses to stay as owner of the water system (Sub-alternative A in the draft Engineering Report).

The Cal Water King City District does have a low-income rate program, which provides a small rate reduction for low-income customers. If San Lucas County Water District chooses to have Cal Water manage its water system (Sub-alternative B), its customers could apply for Cal Water's low-income rate program.

5. Has the State Board identified any entities willing to apply for grants to fund the project?

The State Water Board is currently working with the USEPA to identify additional funding for the San Lucas County Water District

This is in addition to the grant funding the State Water Board expects to provide (eligible for up to \$80,000 per connection; currently, there are 97 connections).

6. If the intertie option is selected, will a ratepayer study need to be conducted in King City due to the potential costs for service in King City being impacted?

Once a final long-term solution project is selected, a rate study will be conducted to determine total billing cost to each service connection.

If San Lucas County Water District chooses to have the Cal Water King City District manage its water system (Sub-alternative B in the draft Engineering Report), Cal Water may conduct a rate study and rate design either specifically for San Lucas or for the Cal Water King City system as a whole. This rate-setting process is regulated by the CPUC (California Public Utilities Commission).



7. What amount of the project's construction costs will be paid by San Lucas residents compared to the Responsible Party?

The amount of construction costs to be paid by the San Lucas community depends on multiple factors, including:

- Which long-term solution project is selected;
- Negotiations between the San Lucas County Water District and the Responsible Parties (for nitrate contaminants only);
- Available funding provided by the State Water Board; and
- Other available funding sources.

Project partners are working to ensure that San Lucas residents do not carry the construction costs of the selected project. Further details on the costs and funding will be determined after the water district selects a proposed solution.

8. What assistance options are available for low-income rate payers?

The San Lucas County Water District does not currently have a low-income rate program. However, the water district could include one in a future rebate study and rate design if it chooses to stay as owner of the water system (Sub-alternative A in the draft Engineering Report).

The Cal Water King City District does have a low-income rate program, which provides a small rate reduction for low-income customers. If San Lucas County Water District chooses to have Cal Water manage its water system (Sub-alternative B), its customers could apply for Cal Water's low-income rate program.

9. The Estimated Costs of Alternatives shows total costs in the millions. Is the Intertie with King City (Alternative 1) the cheapest since it shows the lowest monthly Operations and Management (O&M) costs?

No. An 8.2-mile-long intertie water pipeline with King City (Alternative 1 in the draft Engineering Report) is estimated to be the most expensive of all the alternatives. The



updated Engineering Report to be released in early 2025 will provide more clarity about potential water rates.

10. If San Lucas County Water District chooses to have the Cal Water King City District manage its water system, how much more expensive will it be for the total project costs? How much more will it cost residents each month?

The draft Engineering Report gives rough estimates of monthly costs to ratepayers to show the difference in costs for each option. But these estimates did not include other possible funding sources, such as grants and/or contributions from the Responsible Parties. The updated Engineering Report to be released in early 2025 will provide more clarity about potential water rates.

Timeline

11. Once a solution is selected, how long will it take for the water to be safe to drink/use?

The updated Engineering Report to be released in early 2025 will provide revised timelines for potential project completion for all the proposed solutions.

This report will also include additional proposed solutions that may have shorter timeframes than the ones listed in the current draft Engineering Report. This FAQ will be updated with these timeframes after the release of the updated report.

12. Which option has the shortest construction timeline? Will the lower cost options (Alternative 2 or Alternative 3) be quicker to complete than the pipeline option (Alternative 1)?

The draft Engineering report estimates that Ion Exchange treatment (Alternative 2 in the draft Engineering Report) and Reverse Osmosis (Alternative 3) would have the shortest construction timelines.



Both options have roughly equal timelines, which are significantly shorter than the estimated time that planning, permitting and construction could take to build an intertie water pipeline with King City (Alternative 1).

Drinking Water

13. Do all these solutions address nitrate contaminants?

Yes. All the proposed project "alternatives" listed in the draft Engineering Report are designed to bring San Lucas into compliance with state and federal standards for safe drinking water for all regulated contaminants.

14. After a solution is implemented, will the water be safe for human consumption, cooking and sanitation purposes?

Yes. All the proposed project "alternatives" listed in the draft Engineering Report are designed to bring San Lucas' drinking water into compliance with state and federal drinking water standards.

15. After a solution is implemented, will the water come from King City or a well in San Lucas? If it comes from a well in San Lucas, will the water be safe to drink?

An intertie water pipeline (Alternative 1 in the draft Engineering Report) would bring water to San Lucas from King City.

The remaining proposed solutions would remove contaminants by treating the water from well(s) in San Lucas so that water provided from the system meets all state and federal standards for drinking water. This includes Ion Exchange treatment (Alternative 2), Reverse Osmosis (Alternative 3), and Wellhead Treatment with New Well Drilling (Alternative 4).



16. In the case that any of these alternatives fail after being implemented, what agency and/or entity is responsible for providing short-term water supplies while a long-term option is found?

If a long-term water solution is put in place but fails later on, providing short-term water supplies to San Lucas residents would be at the discretion of the water district that is managing the system.

The role of the Responsible Parties in providing short-term water supplies (due to nitrate contaminants only) would depend on how an agreement is structured between the Responsible Parties and the San Lucas County Water District.

17. Previous studies claim it is dangerous for pregnant women and babies to consume water with nitrate levels above 5 mg/L (“milligrams per liter”). What are the options for short-term water supplies for pregnant women and babies in San Lucas if nitrate levels reach above 5 mg/L?

Each alternative listed in the draft Engineering Report is designed to bring San Lucas’ drinking water into compliance with state and federal drinking water standards. There are no requirements to provide replacement water supplies for drinking water that meets state and federal standards.

If deemed necessary by the San Lucas County Water District and community residents, both Ion Exchange treatment (Alternative 2) and Reverse Osmosis treatment (Alternative 3) could be adjusted to remove nitrate levels to below 5 mg/L using a "bypass and blend" method. Note that this method may increase some costs for Operations & Maintenance over time.



18. What is the State Board doing to ensure contaminants do not reach King City's water supply?

The Cal Water King City District is regulated by the State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water and subject to the enforcement of state and federal regulations for safe drinking water. Currently, Cal Water King City's drinking water quality is in full compliance.

Cal Water has to test its water regularly for nitrate and other regulated contaminants. If contaminant levels increase, then Cal Water may have to test more often to make sure they can take action before legal levels are exceeded. If, in the future, wells in King City became contaminated, Cal Water is required to take action to replace or treat its water to ensure that the water quality remains within legal levels.

19. At what nitrate and other contaminant levels does Ion Exchange treatment become infeasible?

Ion Exchange treatment (Alternative 2 in the draft Engineering Report) is typically most efficient and effective at nitrate levels below 50 mg/L ("milligrams per liter").

Treating nitrate concentrations above 50 mg/L is possible but would increase operating costs. Historical nitrate levels in San Lucas from 2016 to 2023 have not gone above 20 mg/L. If Ion Exchange treatment is chosen as the desired treatment alternative, pilot testing is recommended to determine the overall performance on San Lucas' groundwater.

20. At what nitrate and other contaminant levels does Reverse Osmosis treatment become infeasible?

Reverse Osmosis (Alternative 3 in the draft Engineering Report) can effectively treat nitrate concentrations of 100 mg/L ("milligrams per liter") or higher - or twice as much compared to Ion Exchange treatment.



But the overall performance of Reverse Osmosis can be affected by the presence of other contaminants besides nitrates. High concentrations of other contaminants (such as magnesium or salinity) would increase operation & maintenance costs. If Reverse Osmosis is selected as the desired alternative, pilot testing is recommended to determine the overall performance on San Lucas' groundwater.

21. If the intertie water pipeline with King City (Alternative 1) is selected, what is the quality of King City water? Could potential contaminants from King City wells affect San Lucas?

The Cal Water King City District water system does not currently have any water quality compliance issues. An intertie water pipeline with King City (Alternative 1 in the draft Engineering Report) would provide San Lucas with the same drinking water source.

However, the intertie water pipeline could present water quality issues for San Lucas residents, as it would require a booster pump station and chlorine injection system to avoid contaminants caused by water age or water pressure issues as water travels through the 8.2-mile-long pipeline from King City to San Lucas. These additional water system requirements would add to Operations & Maintenance costs over time.

General

22. Have the mediating parties in the Clean-up and Abatement Order created and submitted a Water Replacement plan? If so, can this be provided publicly?

Yes. The Responsible Parties submitted a Water Replacement Plan proposal to the Central Coast Water Board on June 21, 2013. This document is publicly available via email request and has also via the Water Boards official website:

<https://bit.ly/SanLucasWaterBoards>.



For more details about the requirement to submit the Water Replacement Plan proposal:

CAO condition number 1.b (CAO page 8) states that, “By June 24, 2013, the Dischargers [Responsible Parties], in collaboration with Monterey County, CHISPA [Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, Inc.], and the water district, may submit for [Central Coast Water Board] Executive Officer concurrence, a Water Replacement Plan proposal that clarifies and outlines their mutual collaborative commitment to identify and develop a new potable water source for the District. The Replacement Water Plan proposal must clearly define the Dischargers’ role and contribution to the final solution, include an implementation schedule and a proposed schedule for providing progress reports.” On June 21, 2013, the Responsible Parties submitted a Water Replacement Plan to the Central Coast Water Board and this document was provided via email to CLRA on September 26, 2024.

23. For any project, will there be any annexation needed under the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)? Are there any new districts that need to be created? What are the costs associated with that? Who will be responsible for such costs?

Annexation is not required by any of the proposed project "alternatives" listed in the draft Engineering Report.

If San Lucas County Water District chooses to have Cal Water manage its water system (Sub-alternative B in the draft Engineering Report), the required costs for this will be included in the "permitting" portion of the total project cost in the upcoming final Engineering Report (anticipated early 2025).

The total construction costs will be paid through external funding, such as grant funding from the State Water Board, grant funding from other sources, and/or



contributions from the Responsible Parties. If there are any unfunded costs after financial assistance, these costs will need to be paid through other sources, including a potential loan repaid through increased water rates over time.

24. Which option has the best potential to upscale should development occur, or should the community want to grow the number of connections?

Ion Exchange treatment (Alternative 2 in the draft Engineering Report) and Reverse Osmosis (Alternative 3) are best suited to accommodate the need for additional capacity in the future. Both systems can be designed to accommodate space for future ion exchange vessels or reverse osmosis membranes.

In comparison, an intertie pipeline with King City (Alternative 1) may be limited by the size of the pipeline or by the water allocation from King City. It should be noted that increasing the size of the pipeline to accommodate for future expansion will increase the construction costs of this alternative. Additionally, certain funding sources may be limited to improvements for the current population only, not future development.

25. After the mediation process under the Clean-up and Abatement Order concludes, do polluters have any responsibility for costs of nitrate spikes or other adverse consequences?

After a long-term drinking water solution to address the nitrate is operational and continually delivering safe drinking water, the Responsible Parties will be in compliance with the Clean-up and Abatement Order.

If the drinking water solution doesn't continually deliver safe drinking water or the Responsible Parties do not follow the agreed-upon conditions negotiated between the water district and the Responsible Parties, the Central Coast Water Board may reopen the original Clean-up and Abatement Order, issue a new order, or pursue other enforcement actions.



26. Does any prop 218 study need to be undertaken in King City?

Prop 218 (also known as the "Right to Vote on Taxes Act") would not be required for this project.

If the San Lucas County Water District chooses to have Cal Water King City District manage its water system (Sub-alternative B in the draft Engineering Report), Cal Water is not a local government entity or agency subject to the requirements of prop 218. Instead, its rates are governed and approved by the CPUC (California Public Utilities Commission).

27. If the Intertie with King City (Alternative 1) is chosen, who will be responsible for operation and maintenance of the pipeline, San Lucas or King City?

If San Lucas County Water District chooses to stay as owner of the water system (Sub-alternative A in the draft Engineering Report), San Lucas County Water District would be responsible for operation and maintenance of the pipeline.

If San Lucas County Water District chooses to have Cal Water King City District manage its water system (Sub-alternative B), Cal Water would be responsible for operation and maintenance of the pipeline.

28. Will fixing the water lines going into people's homes be included with a wastewater treatment plant (Alternative 2 or Alternative 3)?

All the proposed project "alternatives" listed in the draft Engineering Report include cleaning the water service lines connecting people's homes to the main water system (listed as "distribution system rehabilitation" in the draft Engineering Report).



29. Who is responsible for Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs once a solution is implemented and construction is done?

If San Lucas County Water District chooses to stay as owner of the water system (Sub-alternative A in the draft Engineering Report), it would be responsible for future operation and maintenance costs.

If San Lucas County Water District chooses to have Cal Water King City District manage its water system (Sub-alternative B), Cal Water would be responsible for operation and maintenance costs.

In either case, any operation and maintenance costs not funded by outside sources would be included in water rates.

30. What is the community engagement plan moving forward? How can residents or members of the public continue to make their voices heard?

Community engagement will continue through the Rural Community Assistance Corp (RCAC), the State Water Board, and the San Lucas County Water District.

As part of their technical assistance contract funded by the State Water Board, RCAC will make monthly on-site visits to the San Lucas community, offering services in both English and Spanish. These site visits will include workshops, trainings and meetings with San Lucas residents to provide project status updates, strengthen community advocacy, and build understanding of water system operations and maintenance. RCAC will proactively engage the community to gather their questions and concerns.

The San Lucas County Water District is committed to hearing the voices of its customers so it can make the best possible choice for water systems improvements. RCAC will work closely with San Lucas residents during their monthly site visits to make sure the water district has all the information needed for both short-term and long-term drinking water solutions.



The State Water Board will continue to provide the San Lucas community with information on potential water solutions and support future community meetings as needed. The most current information will be made available in both English and Spanish at the State Water Board's official website:

<https://bit.ly/SanLucasWaterBoards>

You can also ask questions or make your voice heard by using one of the following options:

Fill out a comment card:

San Lucas County Water District
53365 Main St, San Lucas, CA 93954
(ask for Office Manager Antonio Ramirez)

Send an email: OPP-SAFER@Waterboards.ca.gov

Use the online form: <https://bit.ly/SanLucasWaterBoards>

