



City of Sausalito

Prop. 218 Sewer Health and Safety Upgrades

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Rev. as of 06/08/09

Q: Why is the City upgrading its sewer system now? What's at stake?

A: Our sewer system is old and deteriorating —some of our over 27 miles of pipe are more than 60 years old. Several sections of pipe are literally crumbling. This has caused several spills of raw sewage. These spills have entered the Bay, making it a health risk to be in or near the water. Spills of raw sewage on land in populated areas have also presented a health and safety risk to the community.

Due to several recent spills, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has put the City of Sausalito, the Sausalito-Marin City Sanitary District (SMCSD) and the Tamalpais Community Services District (TCSD) under a legal order to make essential environmental, health and safety upgrades to local sewer systems. For the City of Sausalito's part, these upgrades will make our system safer by helping to prevent hazardous spills of raw sewage.

Making these upgrades will help protect the environment and the Bay, ensure the health and safety of our residents, and prevent future significant fines from the EPA for non-compliance.

Q: What will new rates pay for?

A: New rates will ensure that we are able to make necessary upgrades to our aging system, and maintain our system in a cost-effective manner, minimizing the likelihood of dangerous spills in the future. We have already identified more than \$7.6 million dollars in capital improvement projects that must be made to comply with environmental, health, and safety standards. These upgrades include replacing 3.1 miles of aging and deteriorating pipes.

Q: Will the City seek additional funds from other sources?

Yes. Federal dollars have recently been appropriated for Cities making these essential upgrades because aging sewer systems and tougher environmental standards are a problem all over the country. If we are able to move forward with these new rates in July, we will be well situated to qualify for federal dollars, which either require matching funds or are loans and require the ability to begin construction by November 1, 2009. These new rates will allow us to qualify for federal funds that would otherwise go to other cities.

Q: Is the City working with other involved agencies on these system upgrades?

A: Yes. The EPA order also applies to the Sausalito-Marín City Sanitary District (SMCSD) and the Tamalpais Community Services District (TCSD) because we share Richardson's Bay waterfront. The three agencies are required by the EPA Order to coordinate efforts to ensure the most effective use of resources and the health and safety of our community.

Q: Why are these upgrades so important?

A: Without these upgrades, our system will continue to age and deteriorate. This will result in more frequent sewage spills and potentially larger, more dangerous spills. These spills will continue to damage our Bay environment. If the City fails to comply with the EPA order, we could face hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines, which would be irresponsible in today's economic climate.

Q: Will these upgrades improve water conditions in the Bay?

A: Yes. By improving our sewer system, replacing aging pipes, and better maintaining existing pipes, we can prevent future spills of raw sewage into the Bay. These spills close beaches and waterways and present a real danger to our community. While we can never prevent 100% of spills, these upgrades will ensure we have a safer system with very few, and much smaller, spills which can be contained more easily.

Q: What portion of the sewer system will be affected by these capital projects?

A: Of the more than 27 miles of pipe in our system, 3.1 miles will be replaced completely. Because of the interconnectedness of the system—these repairs will make the entire system run more efficiently and safely.

Q: Who will these upgrades benefit?

A: Our entire community. All residents and property owners will benefit from upgrades to our sewer system. Fewer spills of raw sewage will protect the environment and the health and safety of the entire community.

Q: Can we make these upgrades without new rates?

Q: Not without cutting other, important city services. These upgrades require a significant capital investment in our community's health and safety. Unfortunately there are no other sources that can fund these needed upgrades other than the City's general fund, which is already devoted to funding important city services, such as police and fire protection, recreation services and street maintenance.

Q: How can we be sure that these funds will be spent as promised?

A: All funds raised by sewer fees are legally required to be spent on the sewer system. In addition, these funds are subject to annual independent audits, the results of which are available to the public.

Q: Can these funds be taken by the State?

A: No. These funds are legally required to stay in Sausalito and be spent on our sewer system. Sacramento cannot take these funds.

Q: How can I get more information?

A: More information is available on our City's website at: www.ci.sausalito.ca.us
In addition you can call 1-800-676-7516 between 8 AM and 5 PM, Monday through Friday to speak with someone about your specific questions.