

# City Manager's Weekly Update

City of Santa Cruz

February 21, 2023

## Laguna Creek Diversion Retrofit Wins Historic Preservation Project of the Year

We're proud to report that the Water Department's Laguna Creek Diversion Retrofit project has been awarded the historic preservation "Project of the Year" by the Monterey Chapter of American Public Works Association.

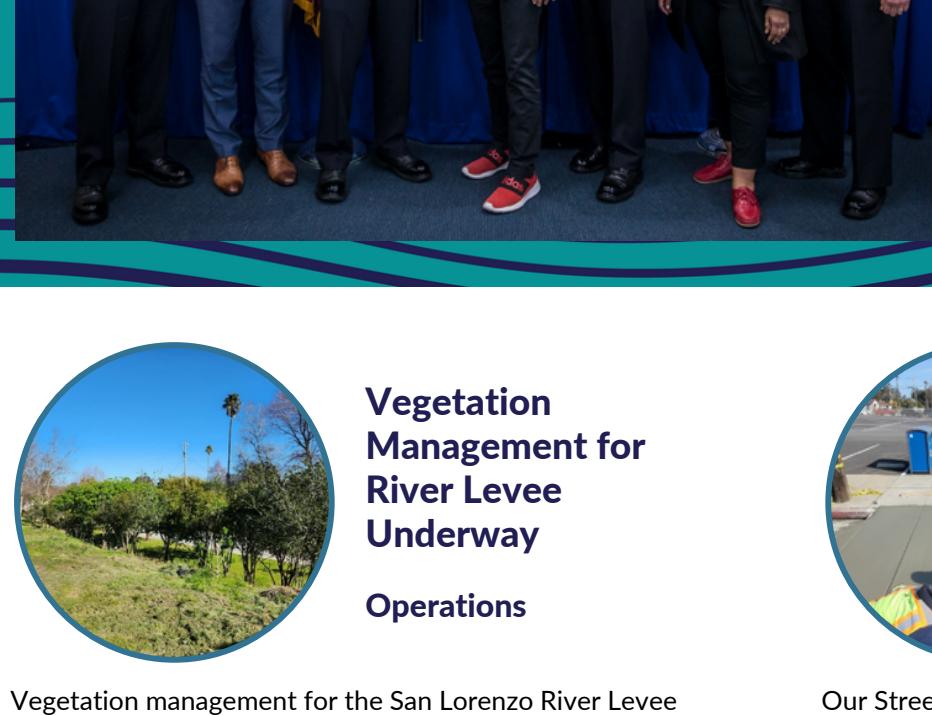
The Laguna Creek Diversion facility is one of four North Coast sources providing raw water to the Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant. The original dam and diversion on Laguna Creek were constructed in 1889 prior to modern environmental and safety requirements, resulting in reduced habitat complexity for fish and other species, as well as operational constraints. The retrofit project changed the water intake to reduce obstruction by sediment, provide appropriate fish screening, provides better operational flexibility, and improved access and safety for the facility.

In addition, the project documents the important role Laguna Creek dam and diversion played in the history of Santa Cruz's water system. A companion brochure to the project shares the story of Santa Cruz's early water system and its founders, details of the original Laguna Creek dam and diversion, and a chronology of key moments in the water system's history.



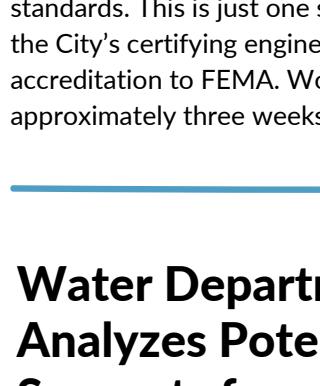
Retrofitted Laguna Creek dam and diversion, January 2023

## City Welcomes Four New Officers to SCPD Ranks!



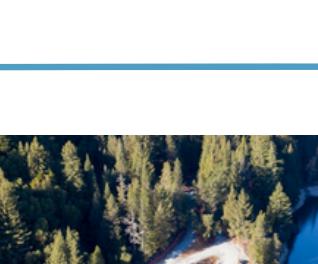
Meet Officer Austin Kibler, Officer Jacob Ronzano, Officer Kelley Brown, and Officer Jeanette Valencia. City Manager Matt Huffaker, Mayor Fred Keeley and Councilwoman Sonja Brunner attended the ceremony and thanked each officer for choosing our community to serve and protect.

"It is always an honor to swear in new officers to our agency," said Chief Escalante. "Please join us in congratulating our new officers as they embark on a career in public safety."



### Vegetation Management for River Levee Underway Operations

Vegetation management for the San Lorenzo River Levee FEMA Accreditation project started early this week. Maintaining current vegetation on the inboard and outboard sides of the levee is required per U.S. Army Corp of Engineer standards. This is just one section of the work needed so that the City's certifying engineer can recommend levee accreditation to FEMA. Work is expected to last approximately three weeks.



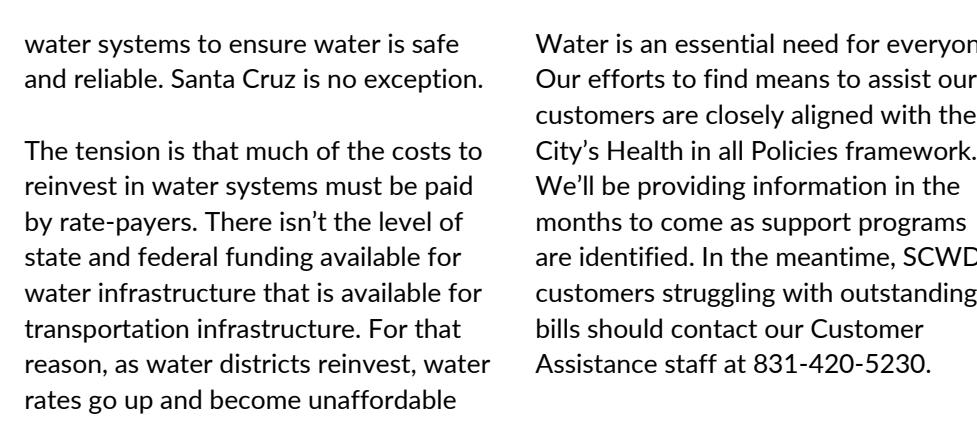
### Walkway & Curb Repaired at Beach Street & Leibrandt Street Maintenance

Our Street Maintenance division repaired a walkway and curb ramp at Beach Street and Leibrandt Avenue, an area that sees much traffic year-round. The paint crew also re-painted stall lines and space numbers in downtown parking lot 4.

## Water Department Analyzes Potential Supports for Customers Struggling with Water Bills

For the Santa Cruz Water Department (SCWD), a big area of focus this year is looking at ways we can assist customers who are struggling to pay their water bills. Service shut-offs for non-payment will resume in the next few months (after being on hold during the pandemic) and we have several customers who will be affected.

Water bills are going up all over the country as water districts upgrade failing infrastructure. Most of the nation's water infrastructure was built around the same time – the mid-twentieth century – and much of it has outlived its life span. This requires water districts to reinvest hundreds of millions of dollars in their



Work underway on the \$103 million Newell Creek Dam improvements.

water systems to ensure water is safe and reliable. Santa Cruz is no exception.

The tension is that much of the costs to reinvest in water systems must be paid by rate-payers. There isn't the level of state and federal funding available for water infrastructure that is available for transportation infrastructure. For that reason, as water districts reinvest, water rates go up and become unaffordable for some customers.

Water is an essential need for everyone. Our efforts to find means to assist our customers are closely aligned with the City's Health in all Policies framework. We'll be providing information in the months to come as support programs are identified. In the meantime, SCWD customers struggling with outstanding bills should contact our Customer Assistance staff at 831-420-5230.



## 250 People Attend West Cliff Drive Community Conversation

Over 250 people attended Traffic Engineering virtual West Cliff Drive Community Conversations Monday night with several dozen of their questions answered by our Sustainability & Climate Action Manager, Public Works Director, City Manager, and Planning Director.

Next steps in the West Cliff Drive work include:

- Emergency funding and associated projects

- Physical and Traffic Adjustments

- Coastal Commission Prioritization Permits

- Community Engagement

- West Cliff Recovery Roadmap

A video recording of the meeting is now posted where you can also sign up for email updates and post questions and concerns. [Learn more](#).