



# Santa Clara Valley Water District

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**File No.:** 18-0654

**Agenda Date:** 8/21/2018

**Item No.:** 2.2.

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## BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

### **SUBJECT:**

Discussion of Homelessness Issues.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive information for discussion of homelessness issues

### **SUMMARY:**

Santa Clara County currently has over 7,000 homeless individuals, with 74% unsheltered and many living in the riparian areas along urban creeks. In 2016/17, the District removed more than 907 tons of trash and debris from over 400 encampment sites. Beyond trash and debris, impacts of homelessness on the riparian environment include bank excavation, vegetation removal, erosion, fire, hazardous materials and bio-waste, and impacts to fish and wildlife through poaching and habitat destruction. This is a complex countywide problem requiring multi-faceted solutions. The District is committed to working collaboratively with other government agencies, including the Cities of Gilroy and Morgan Hill, and the community to reduce homeless encampments along local creeks.

In addition to other funding sources for creek protection, the 2012 voter-approved special parcel tax (Safe Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Measure B) provided \$8 million in funding specifically for encampment cleanup with a performance indicator of 52 cleanups a year. Development of an agreement with the City of San Jose established a model for partnering with other cities to work jointly on encampment cleanup efforts. The District works closely with cities, mostly San Jose and Gilroy, on joint encampment cleanup events where the District provides crews, supplies, equipment and the regulatory permits required for the work. The cities provide the pre-encampment cleanup notification, site security, as well as the collection and storage of certain personal property. The cities also provide outreach and support services in advance and on the day of the cleanup. The demand continues to increase, from 131 cleanups in FY14 to over 400 in FY17, and has significantly impacted budgeted funding. The demand has exceeded the 15-year funding allocation for this priority under the Safe Clean Water Program.

In 2016, the Board of Directors (Board) formed a Homeless Encampment Ad Hoc Committee to address the overall issue of homelessness germane to the District's flood protection and stream stewardship mission. Work by the Committee includes analyzing surplus properties for possible use by others for housing, making District rental properties available to Santa Clara County's Office of Supportive Housing, and funding nonprofit groups for cleanups. The Committee will be considering

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alternatives to address the shortfalls in funding identified above.

Additional District efforts aimed to reduce and clean up encampments include securing grants and funding for:

1. Security, police patrol services and California Department of Fish and Wildlife assistance;
2. City of San Jose Park Rangers to prevent re-encampment along creeks;
3. Downtown Streets Team, a nonprofit program that engages homeless volunteers, to pick up trash along the creeks while assisting with necessities: a stipend, vital health services and case management;
4. Other nonprofit organizations such as the Gilroy Compassion Center and South Bay Clean Creek Coalition focused on creek cleanups;
5. Adopt a Creek and Coastal Cleanup programs; and
6. Piloting of other tools including providing dumpsters near homeless encampments, clearing understory vegetation and installing alternative fencing or barriers.

The Board also participates in local, state and federal legislative policies that prevent and reduce homelessness. The Board supported Santa Clara County's \$950 million affordable housing bond - Measure A, which voters overwhelmingly approved in November 2016.

District staff participates in regional efforts, including monthly meetings with Santa Clara County cities and public agencies; and chairing both the Zero Litter Initiative and the Bay Area Storm Water Management Agencies Association (BASMAA) trash committee.

Agenda memos for the August 20, 2018 Homeless Encampment Ad Hoc Committee meeting are attached for additional information. Any recommendations from the Committee will be presented to the full Board at a future meeting.

Issues for further discussion may include additional joint efforts, funding sources, and legislative or enforcement opportunities.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no financial impact associated with this item.

#### **CEQA:**

The recommended action does not constitute a project under CEQA because it does not have a potential for resulting in direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Homeless Encampment Ad Hoc Committee Meeting Agenda - August 20, 2018

**UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:**

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