SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY

Groundwater is a vital resource, together let's protect it.

5180 Soquel Drive • Soquel, CA 95073 • (831) 454-3133 • midcountygroundwater.org

Public Comments

Received in advance of March 19, 2026 Board Meeting

- Frank Mara, received March 16, 2026, concerning the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency website
- Dave Ponza, received March 14, 2026, concerning a private well monitoring proposal
- Dave Ponza, received March 16, 2026, concerning a private well monitoring proposal

Received at March 19, 2026 Board Meeting

- Becky Steinbruner, received March 19, 2026, concerning a Central Coast Community Energy Board meeting and Soquel Creek Water District Water Shortage Contingency Plan Draft

Gmail **Tim Carson <admin@midcountygroundwater.org>**

Groundwater agency

3 messages

Frank Mara <frankmara1000@gmail.com> Mon, Mar 16, 2026 at 2:45 PM
To: Manu Koenig <manu.koenig@santacruzcounty.us>, admin@midcountygroundwater.org
Cc: Mara Frank <frankmara1000@gmail.com>

Hi Manu,

If you click thru each of the 3-4 key groundwater metrics on the agency's website dashboard under Sustainability Program tab, then Sustainability Dashboard, the data points to a healthy aquifer that is improving. But, if you read the key metric labels, it's all negative - "Chronic Lowering of Groundwater Levels", "Saltwater Intrusion", etc. Why are the labels not neutral like "Groundwater Levels" and "Saltwater"? It's like the agency is hoping things are terrible and ignoring the actual science. Most importantly, the actual data UNDER each key metric - when you click once - indicates no issues, or very minor isolated issues like one well in Seascape experiencing some saltwater issues.

I found the following positive statement one click behind the doom and gloom labeled metric "Chronic Lowering of Groundwater Levels"… "The basin is not experiencing undesirable results..." (Direct quote). Now, why the double negative? It should state, "The basin is experiencing desirable results, no significant issues." That is what the actual data clearly indicates. Why is the groundwater agency skewing the impression of the state of our groundwater? I'm confused.

Suggestions
1. Instruct the agency to boil up this key, most important statement at the top of the dashboard "The groundwater is experiencing desirable results with no significant issues." This is THE most important, and accurate, science-backed dashboard summary gleaned from the data. Also eliminate all double negatives and state things clearly, like the YELLOW indicator is "Not Experiencing Undesirable Results" should be "Experienced Desirable Results." Right? Most indicators are YELLOW, btw. Totally different impression when you use the correct grammar.

2. Request the state reclassify our aquifer as not critical to eliminate unnecessary cost burdens on all of us. Our aquifer is experiencing desirable results with increasing water levels across most test wells so this is not the time to add burden but to reduce it. Let's get off the critical list, if we are making science-based decisions.

3. If the state won't remove us from the critical list and insists we fund ongoing monitoring, don't add more cost and complexity by rolling out thousands of private well meters, staffing up legions of meter readers, new data analysts, computers, etc, particularly when the agency's own data clearly indicates no significant issues with aquifer. ***Thousands of costly private well meters won't change the data or conclusions.*** Instead, reduce existing testing and reporting to minimums, and add a super small fee - that sunsets in 3 years - to every household that utilizes water from the aquifer, but no new meters, analysis or costs. Stay the course since things are fine and improving.

County Affordability has to be important to all of us and death by a thousand fees, particularly completely unnecessary fees like this one, has to stop. And we definitely don't need more meters and useless infrastructure to maintain.

Thank you for fighting for us!
Frank

P.S. I took a snapshot of the agency's dashboard and associated data in case we need to reference it later.

F

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency <admin@midcountygroundwater.org> Tue, Mar 17, 2026 at 11:59 AM
To: Frank Mara <frankmara1000@gmail.com>
Cc: Manu Koenig <manu.koenig@santacruzcounty.us>
Bcc: Jillian Ritter <jillian.ritter@santacruzcountyca.gov>

Dear Mr. Mara,

This email confirms receipt of your comments submitted via email yesterday. The Board will be informed of your comments.

Thank you for your interest in groundwater management in the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin.

Best regards,
Sophia Sholtz
[Quoted text hidden]
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Administrative Services
SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY
5180 Soquel Drive | Soquel, CA 95073
831.204.0008 *voicemail*
admin@midcountygroundwater.org | www.midcountygroundwater.org

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Gmail

Tim Carson <admin@midcountygroundwater.org>

Private Well Monitoring Proposal

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency <admin@midcountygroundwater.org> Mon, Mar 16, 2026 at 9:30 AM
To: Dave Ponza <daveponza@gmail.com>

Dear Mr. Ponza,

This email confirms receipt of your comments submitted via email this past weekend. The Board will be informed of your comments.

Thank you for your interest in groundwater management in the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin.

Best regards,
Sophia Sholtz

On Sat, Mar 14, 2026 at 10:40 AM Dave Ponza <daveponza@gmail.com> wrote:

> Sent from my iPhone
> Mid-County Groundwater Board of Directors,
> Please include this attached letter in your agenda for the upcoming meeting on March 19th.
> Thank you for your consideration.
> Sincerely
> Dave Ponza

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831.204.0008 *voicemail*
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March 12, 2025. ** ***Next Meeting: Thursday, March 19th- 6pm at Capitola Library***

RE: ***Santa Cruz Mid County Groundwater Agency***

Proposal to Monitor, Inspect & Charge Private Well Owners within the "Basin"

Author: *This is an Opinion piece by Dave Ponza, private well owner for over 38 years residing within the "Basin"off North Rodeo Gulch Road in Soquel*

Intent of Proposal

Develop a method to monitor & charge well owners for water produced by their own private wells.

Reason for Charges

To pay for State of California requirements to monitor and report aquifer level affected by seawater intrusion.

Aquifers in Question

The aquifers affecting Seawater Intrusion are located under the Soquel Creek and Mar Vista Water Districts municipal wells. These aquifers have proven record of seawater intrusion caused by over pumping.

Aquifers NOT affected by Seawater Intrusion

Almost all private wells within the "Basin" extract water from "Perched" water tables located under their private property. These "Perched" water tables are small lakes of groundwater located under their property at elevations far above sea level and the aquifers that Soquel Creek and Mar Vista Water Districts are pumping from.

What is the difference between the "Basin" and Aquifers?

To the casual observer the boundaries of the "Basin" appears arbitrary. No rationale to include private well owners located above the seawater intrusion affected aquifers appears to exist.
Private well owners use "Perched" aquifers and do not affect seawater intrusion.
The boundaries of the 'Basin" need to be redrawn to ***exclude*** private well owners.

***** Note:** *My private well is over 38 years old, 350ft deep, drilled from elevation 600ft and is pumping water at over 300ft ABOVE sea level from a "Perched" water table. Most private wells within the "Basin" are similar. If our private wells were drawing from the same aquifer as Soquel* Creek and Mar Vista Water District wells..
Our wells would have run dry years ago!!

Why the Push to Charge Private Well Owners to pay for State reporting that only relates to Seawater Intrusion mandates?

Many reasons can be extrapolated from this question..
State & Federal Grant monies that have helped pay in the past are drying up. The cost burden is now on Soquel Creek & Mar Vista Water Districts to continue paying for this reporting.
The Groundwater Agency is heavily influenced by these Water Districts.
Private Well owners have only minor influence in Agency voting.

Methods available to the Agency to enact Charges to Private Well Owners.

Much discussion has been done at the "Agency" as to how to enact a "Tax or Fee" on private well owners, whether we agree to it or not. Consultants and legal Council have advised the Agency as to how to pursue adding these costs to private well owners.
NONE of these options allow a direct vote from the private well owners.

The "Agency" can vote to attach a **"Fee for Service"** to our property tax bill to cover these costs.

Two problems with this approach..
When did private well owners agree to be included in the "District"??
A "Fee for Service" must ***prove*** a need for this service.
Private Well owners receive NO Value ***whatsoever*** paying for a State Reporting form that has no bearing on their private well.

The "Agency can call for a **"TAX"** to be added to our county tax bill to cover these additional costs.

Two Problems with this approach,
A vote of the affected parties must be taken before a TAX can be implemented.
If the vote included only private well owners that would be fair.
But if the vote included everyone in the Basin,
Water Districts included, that would not be fair to private well owners.

Either way Private Well owners will be opposed and a legal fight will ensue.

Loss of Property Rights

Every Taxpayer has been shocked by increasing government costs,
school bonds, fee increases and especially property taxes.
When did the water under our private property become the property of the state?
If we agree to this Fee/Tax, the next step will be to charge us for our water usage,
but only if we let them!
Confiscating our private property is the ultimate goal.
Government control of our water source will not end well for us.
This is a typical bureaucracy that only exists to perpetuate itself and grow, grow, grow.
They never solve a problem or complete its mission but just expand its scope.
Do you really believe the charges will remain "Reasonable" and not increase every year? History says NO.
Do you want another bureaucracy snooping around your property telling you what to do, or be fined?
Charging private well owners to pay for reporting required by the State and already done by the water districts will decrease the cost burden to the Water Districts.
Will the Water Districts pass this savings onto their ratepayers or just pocket the windfall?
And by the way, this bureaucracy offers **NO** financial assistance when your well runs dry or your pump & piping break. You are on your own.
But not the Water Districts…
They will run to Uncle Sam and get Government Grants to save them!
And our taxes will be raised…

Join me in opposition to ANY infringement on our rights as private well owners.
Have your voices heard!

(Contact the Agency directly at: midcountygroundwater.org)

Respectfully,

Dave Ponza
daveponza@gmail.com

Gmail **Tim Carson <admin@midcountygroundwater.org>**

Private Well Monitoring Proposal

2 messages

Dave Ponza <daveponza@icloud.com> Mon, Mar 16, 2026 at 3:50 PM
To: admin@midcountygroundwater.org
Cc: Gizelle Sipin <gizelle@sereno.com>, Ed Bogner <edbogner@cruzers.com>, Russ Short <russjs@aol.com>, Ryan Meeks <meeksryan1@gmail.com>, Mara Frank <frankmara1000@gmail.com>, Betty <bjponza@gmail.com>

Mid County Groundwater Board of Directors

Here is a proposal to mitigate your funding request to charge private well owners.
These charges are to pay for your reporting requirements to the State of California.
Private well owners do not trust your motives behind trying to charge us to use our own private wells. The rationale of needing to monitor our water usage, by installing meters and charging us a fee is bogus.
We know our private well usage does not contribute to overdraft or seawater intrusion.
We also realize that once we relinquish our property rights to use our own water we will never get our private property rights back.

If the Groundwater Board wants to
“come clean”
on this issue then a compromise is possible.

How about the Groundwater Board propose this compromise to get private well owners to help out monetarily?

The stated goal now is to just offset the cost of the reporting to the State..

How about purposing a simple yearly fee to cover the reasonable cost of well owners portion of the reporting cost?

** Condition this on two requirements,

#1. There is a permanent “Sunset Clause” that limits this fee to a two year lifespan.

#2 No automatic renewal or infringement on ongoing property rights.

This proposal may achieve a compromise
that clarifies the goals
of the Mid County Groundwater Agency and promote trust with the private well owners.

Sincerely
Dave Ponza

Sent from my iPhone

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency <admin@midcountygroundwater.org> Tue, Mar 17, 2026 at 1:36 PM
To: Dave Ponza <daveponza@icloud.com>

Dear Mr. Ponza,

This email confirms receipt of your comments submitted via email earlier today. The Board will be informed of your comments.

Thank you for your interest in groundwater management in the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin.

Best regards,
Sophia Sholtz

[Quoted text hidden]

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Central Coast Community Energy

CLEAN ENERGY. LOCAL CONTROL.

Policy Board of Directors
March 18, 2026
1:30 PM

Central Coast Community Energy
70 Garden Court, Suite 300
Monterey, CA 93940

REMOTE LOCATION VIA TELECONFERENCE

Any interested parties or community members may attend, and participate in, the meeting at the following addresses where Board members may also join the meeting from:

County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street,
Fifth Floor Redwood Room
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

County Sheriff's Felton Substation
6062 Graham Hill Road, Suite A
Felton, CA 95018

City of Greenfield
108 El Camino Real
Greenfield, CA 93927

County of San Luis Obispo
Government Building
1055 Monterey Street,
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

City of Santa Maria
City Hall
110 East Cook Street, Council Chambers
Santa Maria, CA 93454

City of Carpinteria
City Hall
5775 Carpinteria Avenue
Carpinteria, CA 93013

Hyatt Regency
1209 L Street
Sacramento ca 95814

Marriott Marquis Washington, DC
901 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC, 20001

Public may participate through ZOOM. For ZOOM participation please join by computer audio at:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83507087702

Or join by phone:
+1 669 900 6833 or +1 669 219 2599

Enter this Webinar ID Number: **835 0708 7702** when prompted. Please note there is no Participant Code, you will press # again after the recording prompts you.

You will be placed in the meeting as an attendee. To make a public comment:

- If joined by computer, please press the button to raise your hand
- If joined by phone, please push *9 on your keypad

If you have anything that you wish to be distributed to the Board, please provide 15 copies to a member of 3CE staff or the Board Clerk, who will distribute the information to the Board members and staff.

The public may comment on the consent agenda and matters not listed on the agenda but within the Board's jurisdiction at the opening of the meeting. The Board may not take action at this meeting on any item not listed on the Agenda other than to refer the matter to staff or set it for a future meeting. The public may comment on a specific item listed on this agenda when the Board considers that item. Speakers are limited to 3 minutes each.

In addition, members of the public may request and receive copies without undue delay of any documents that are distributed to the Board, unless there is a specific exemption under the Public Records Act that prevents the disclosure of the record. (Cal. Gov't Code Section 54957.5)

In compliance with Government Code Section 54957.5, non-exempt writings that are distributed to a majority or all of the Board in advance of a meeting and that relate to an agenda item will be made available at 3CE's offices located at 70 Garden Court, Suite 300, Monterey, CA 93940 during normal business hours and are also available on the 3CE website located at: https://pub-3ce.escribemeetings.com/

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any individuals who desire to request a reasonable accommodation or modification to observe or participate in the meeting may make such a request by sending an email to: hvowell@3ce.org Copies of documents may be made in alternative formats, upon request. Requests for accommodations should be made no later than two (2) business days prior to the meeting to allow time for 3CE to address the request.

DISCLOSURE OF CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS: Pursuant to Government Code section 84308, members of the Board are disqualified and not able to participate in any agenda item involving contracts (other than competitively bid, labor, or personal employment contracts), franchises, discretionary land use permits and other entitlements if the Board member received more than $250 in campaign contributions from the applicant or contractor, an agent of the applicant or contractor, or any financially interested participant who actively supports or opposes the decision on the agenda item since January 1, 2023. Members of the Board who have received, and applicants, contractors or their agents who have made, campaign contributions totaling more than $250 to a Board member during the proceeding or for 12 months after a final decision is rendered in that proceeding, are required to disclose that fact for the official record of the subject proceeding. Disclosures must include the amount of the campaign contribution and identify the recipient Board member and may be made either in writing to the Clerk of the Board prior to the subject hearing or by verbal disclosure at the time of the hearing.

Central Coast Community Energy

Welcome & Roll Call

Corrections or Additions
The Clerk will announce agenda corrections or proposed additions of emergency, urgency, or continued items, which will be acted on by the Board as provided in Section 54954.2 of the California Government Code.

Public Comment on Matters Not Listed on the Agenda
The public may provide comments on any item within the Board's jurisdiction but not on the Agenda. The Board may not take action at this meeting on any item not listed on the Agenda other than to refer the matter to staff or set if for a future meeting. Speakers are limited to 3 minutes each.

CLOSED SESSION

1. CONFERENCE WITH REAL PROPERTY NEGOTIATORS – Government Code Section 54956.8 Property: 4610 West Walnut Street, Soquel, CA (APN 030-201-78)
   a. Agency negotiator: Robert Shaw and DeWayne Woods
   b. Negotiating parties: Alan Palmer, Palmer Alan Blair Trust
   c. Under negotiation: Price and Terms
2. Public Employee Performance Evaluation – Position: Chief Executive Officer-Government Code section 54957
3. CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATORS – Agency Negotiators Jim Lewis and Matt Hufaker - Position: Chief Executive Officer - Government Code section 54957.6

CONSENT CALENDAR

4. Approve minutes from the January 28, 2026, meeting of the Policy Board of Directors
5. Consider and Approve Amendment No. 1 to the Employment Agreement between Robert M. Shaw and Central Coast Community Energy for service as Chief Executive Officer
6. FY 2025-26 Energy Programs Update
7. Quarterly Regulatory and Legislative Update
8. Financial Report for the period of October 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025
9. Investment Performance Report for the period of October 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025

REGULAR AGENDA

10. CEO Report
    a. Community Advisory Council Report
    b. 3CE Advocacy Supports Long Duration Storage and Flexibility
    c. State Legislative Update
11. Receive update on over-subscription of the Residential Battery Rebate Program participation and provide direction regarding staff recommendation to modify and monitor program

12. Authorization to Proceed with Second Energy Prepayment Transaction (Estimated $800 Million – $1.2 Billion)

13. Receive a presentation on 3CE's FY 2024-25 Audited Financial Statements

14. Adopt Resolution PB-2026-02 to establish a temporary residential rate "3CFlex" to support customers impacted by the California Public Utilities Commission's Power Charge Indifference Adjustment (PCIA) decisions.
And approve 3CFlex effective May 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026, with total residential enrollment capped at no more than 10% of residential load

Adjournment

Item 6.3
3/17/26 Soquel Creek Water District Board Mtg agenda

hand-delivered to mtg 3/19/26 B Becky Steinbrue

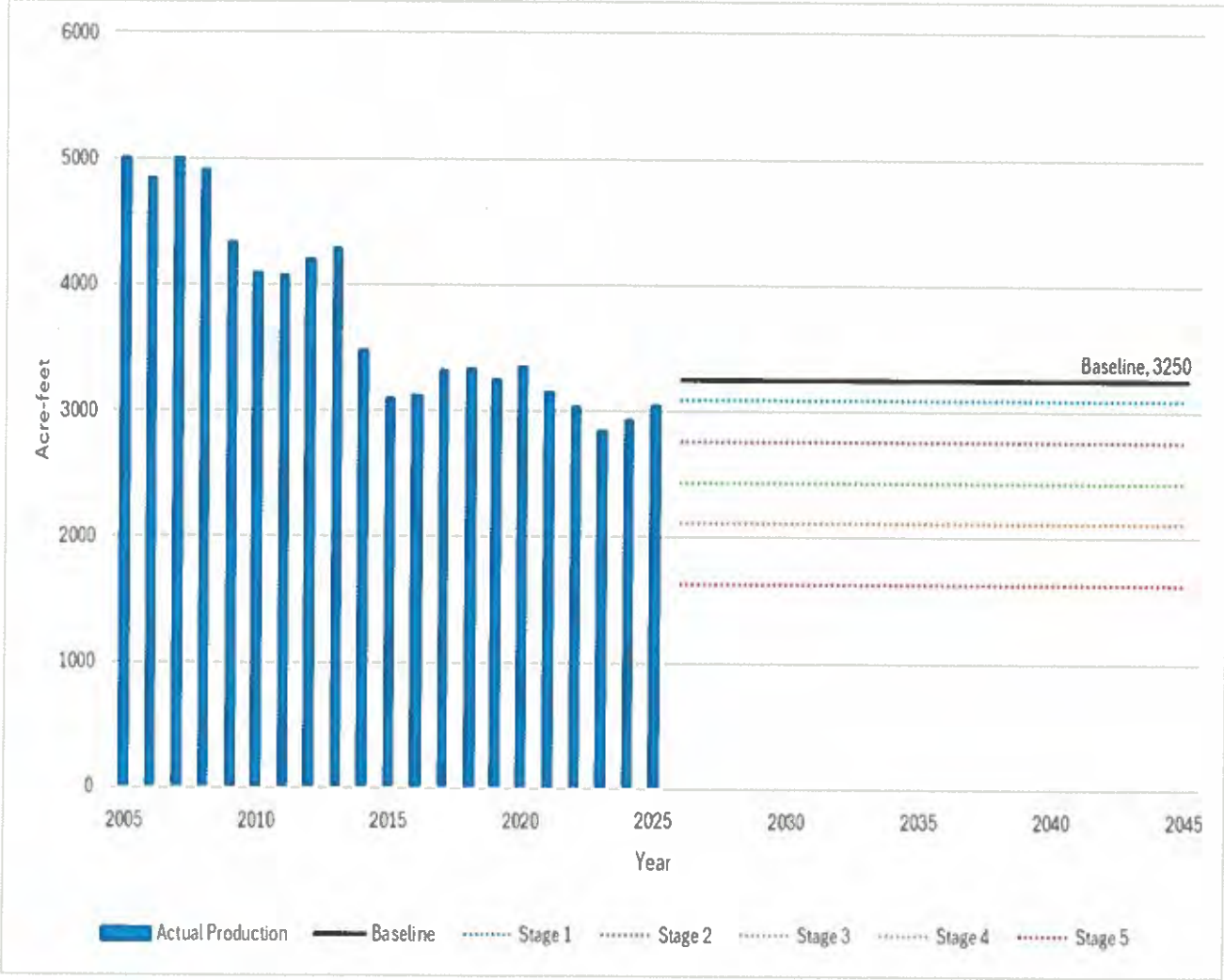
(Item 5. A)

Water Shortage Contingency Plan Draft Baseline and Shortage Stage Production Targets

The new baseline for the Water Shortage Contingency Plan would be 3,250 AFY (3,256 AFY is the projected demand in 2030, per the demand projections approved by the Board of Directors on January 20, 2026). The 2020 WSCP had a baseline demand of 3,900 AFY. Demand in this context is demand on the aquifer (production).

The production targets under each stage of curtailment, considering this baseline change, are shown below.

Table 1. Production Targets by Baseline

Shortage Stage	Description	2020 WSCP (AFY, based on percentage reduction from a 3,900 AFY baseline)	2025 DRAFT WSCP (AFY, based on percentage reduction from a 3,250 AFY baseline)
Stage 1 5% Reduction	Water Shortage Alert	3,705	3,088
Stage 2 15% Reduction	Water Shortage Warning	3,315	2,763
Stage 3 25% Reduction	Emergency Water Shortage	2,925	2,438
Stage 4 35% Reduction	Severe Water Shortage Emergency	2,535	2,113
Stage 5 50% Reduction	Critical Water Shortage Emergency	1,950	1,625
Stage 6 Greater than 50% Reduction	Super-Critical Water Shortage Emergency	Less than 1,950	Less than 1,625

Graph 1. Actual Production and Proposed Future Shortage Stages