



News Release

South Tahoe Public Utility District
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OPINION: 2024 Highlights from your Water and Sewer District

South Lake Tahoe, Ca (January 6, 2025) - The South Tahoe Public Utility District works around the clock to provide our mountain community with safe, clean drinking water, water for firefighting and reliable wastewater services to protect Lake Tahoe. As we begin 2025, I want to share some of the highlights from your water and sewer district during the previous year.

Exceptional Staff – We have a large, complex system for a relatively small town. Maintaining and operating these systems requires experienced, specialized, and professional staff. I want to thank the 120 dedicated public servants who workday and night to ensure that our customers receive the best service possible by anticipating and planning for emergencies, complying with ever changing state regulations and operating the water and wastewater systems efficiently and effectively. You don't just have to take my word for it, in 2024, the District received several awards, including an award for transparency from the California Special District's Association, financial accountability from the California Municipal Officers Association, distinction in information technology from the Municipal Information Systems Association of California, and a brand new award from the Association of California Water Agencies for District excellence.

Investing in Tahoe's Tomorrow – The majority of our water and sewer infrastructure was built in the 1950s and 1960s and requires ongoing maintenance, replacement or improvement. During 2024, we upsized waterlines and installed fire hydrants for fire readiness, recoated water tanks and added backup power, rehabilitated drinking water wells and sewer pump stations, and replaced a critical basin at the wastewater treatment plant. To keep your rates as low as possible, we actively seek grant funding and low-cost loans through state funding programs. To help offset costs for our customers, the District secured \$4.4 million in grants this year for various projects including a Pioneer Trail waterline project, backup power for drinking water wells, and water conservation programs, to name a few. In addition to the \$4.4 million secured in 2024, we are currently managing \$8.2 million in grants and \$21.7 million in subsidized low-interest loans. These projects would not have been possible without the support from our Board of Directors who passed a new five-year rate schedule. We understand that nobody likes rate increases, but we must continue to improve the systems to ensure they are functional today and for future generations. The Board also adopted an additional Customer Assistance Program tier to help low-income customers with their monthly water and sewer bills.

Fire Readiness – Wildfire presents a danger to our life, property, community and the environment. We are lucky to have a plentiful supply of groundwater, but getting this water to the surface and transporting it throughout our service area can be challenging. This year, we replaced nearly 10,000 linear feet of undersized waterlines in the Apache, Black Bart, and Herbert/Walkup neighborhoods.



We also installed an additional 35 fire hydrants throughout the City of South Lake Tahoe. Water tanks are critical to meet water demands during a fire. To ensure ample water storage, we recoated four water tanks and replaced one. To address power outages during emergencies, we installed back-up power at 12 water tank sites. The District relies on 12 active drinking water wells to supply delicious Tahoe tap to the community. These wells range in age from 16 to 65 years old. This year, we rehabilitated two wells to ensure reliable supply and high-quality drinking water.

Protecting Lake Tahoe – When you flush the toilet or wash your hands, the wastewater flows through an intricate system of sewer pipes and pump stations to the wastewater treatment plant, where it is treated and cleaned. This year we replaced select sewer mains in the Herbert/Walkup neighborhood and rehabilitated two of our largest wastewater pump stations to ensure reliable wastewater collection. We treat 3.5 million gallons of wastewater per day and there’s no stopping the flow. This means we need redundancy throughout the treatment process. This year, we replaced the last of three secondary clarifiers that are critical to cleaning wastewater. To comply with the Porter Cologne Act, we pump our recycled water out of the basin and over Luther Pass to Alpine County where it is used for agricultural irrigation. This year we completed the Recycled Water Strategic Plan to determine the most cost-effective, innovative, and environmentally conscious way to manage recycled water in the future.

Sustainability – This year we broke ground on a 1 Mega Watt solar array project that will offset approximately one-third of the power used at the wastewater treatment plant. This project is expected to save the District more than \$1 million over the first five years, and more than \$8.5 million over the life of the solar array. These savings will be invested in additional water and sewer infrastructure improvements. This project, which is scheduled for completion in summer of 2025, will be the largest solar array in the Tahoe basin. We will continue to seek opportunities to expand our renewable energy portfolio and implement system operational efficiencies whenever possible.

All of this would not have been possible without the support and direction from our Board of Directors. Thank you to outgoing President David Peterson for your service, congratulations to Kelly Sheehan for winning another term, and welcome new Board member Joel Henderson. The Board’s role in developing and guiding policy is more important than ever as we continue to implement our long-term capital improvement plan by prudently investing in the replacement or rehabilitation of our water and wastewater systems.

Paul Hughes, General Manager

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