

THE HERON

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District

Summer 2023



Upgraded Treatment Plant Successfully Weathered Storms

When a series of powerful storms pounded California during the first three weeks in January, sending high flows into the sewer collection and treatment system, the District's recently completed Secondary Treatment Plant Upgrade and Recycled Water Expansion Project was put to its first major test. The upgraded plant weathered the storm and passed its first real-time test.

During major storm events, flows into all wastewater treatment plants can increase exponentially in what is known as inflow & infiltration (I&I), which occurs when stormwater enters the sewer system from unpermitted drains and through cracks in collection system pipes. The recently completed, \$64-million

upgrade and expansion project was designed to increase the plant's wet weather treatment capacity up to 18 million gallons per day.

With these improvements in place, the District was able to collect and treat all the flows coming into the system during the January storm events with no overflows or untreated discharges to Miller Creek, which drains to the San Francisco Bay. This was not the case with some sewer districts in the Bay Area whose collection and treatment systems were overwhelmed during the storms and millions of gallons of untreated sewage was spilled into the Bay.

The treatment plant's ability to

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Replacement of Operations and Administration Building In the Works

For the past decade, the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District's Board of Directors (Board) has focused much of its attention on renovating and upgrading the District's aging collection and treatment infrastructure. A major treatment plant upgrade and recycled water expansion project approved in 2017 and undertaken in 2019 has recently been completed, and the Board is considering the next critical infrastructure needs to maintain the health and safety of the District's facilities.

Plans are under way to replace the administrative and operations building, which, like much of the original treatment plant, was built in the 1950s and needs to be brought up to current standards. A new laboratory and corporation yard will round out the project improvements. Preliminary design work on the project is anticipated in 2024. The final cost of the project — and funding options — will be determined once the building design is selected.

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New wastewater clarifiers are part of the recently completed Secondary Treatment Plant Upgrade and Recycled Water Expansion Project.

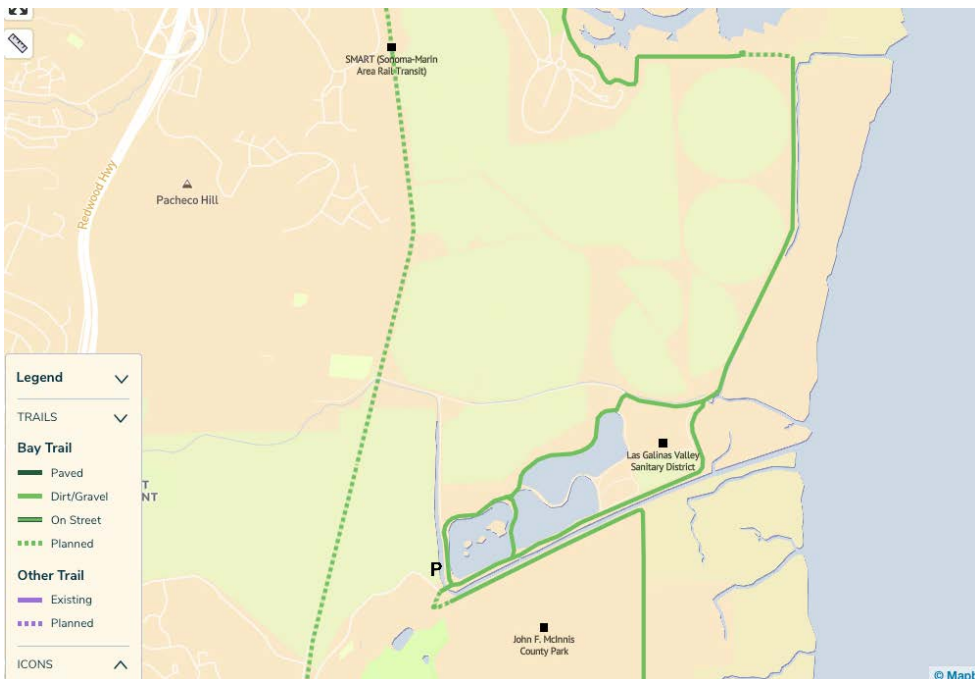
SF Bay Trail Traverses Las Gallinas Reclamation Ponds

The 3.5-miles of wide, flat trails that surround the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District's storage ponds are not only a popular destination for local walkers and bird lovers, the trails are also a key link in the San Francisco Bay Trail (Bay Trail), a series of connected walking and cycling paths that will someday ring the San Francisco and San Pablo bays. Eventually, the trail will form a continuous loop around the entire 500 miles of the Bay.

Currently, the Bay Trail enters the District's 385-acre reclamation area south of the plant, circles the three ponds (one is fresh water, the others are treated wastewater storage). The trail travels north for a mile along what is designated as the Las Gallinas levee segment. It then leaves District property and meets the Hamilton southern levee "gap," a segment of the trail that is not officially complete. A "San Francisco Bay Trail" sign

is located on the same post as a sign that reads "Restricted Area, Unauthorized Persons Keep Out." The 0.15-mile gap heads west and connects with the Hamilton southern cross levee segment. (Information on the status of the "gap" portion of the trail was not immediately available from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which manages the trail.)

There are currently 350 miles of the Bay Trail that connects communities, parks, open spaces, schools and transit. It provides space for recreation and active transportation to work, school and other destinations in communities around the Bay. Access to the Las Gallinas portion of the trail can be found just past the District treatment plant at the eastern terminus of Smith Ranch Road, where parking, maps and rules are posted.



A State Senate bill in 1987 directed the Association of Bay Area Governments to establish the SF Bay Trail and a trail plan was adopted in 1989. To date, more than 350 miles of the ultimate 500-mile trail have been built.

An interactive Bay Trail map is available at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission website: <https://mtc.ca.gov/operations/regional-trails-parks/san-francisco-bay-trail/bay-trail-interactive-map>

Welcome Gary Robards, Newest Board Member



Gary Robards, the newest member of the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District (LGVSD) Board of Directors, brings

decades of experience in the wastewater industry to his new role and a unique perspective on the District and its history.

As a retired civil engineer, Robards has 38 years of experience designing and managing sewer facility projects – including work on numerous LGVSD projects as an employee of Nute Engineering, a San Rafael-based firm. He helped design the reclamation system and ponds, various pipeline projects, and plant upgrades. Robards served as the District Engineer for various districts within the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin, and was the District Engineer with the Richardson Bay Sanitary District for 30 years.

“I have sat at board tables so I know how boards operate,” said Robards. “I see the Board’s role as overseeing the budget and key projects and procedures. I am also familiar with the issues

the District faces and have some technical background.”

Robards was appointed to the District Board of Directors in January to fill a vacant seat on the Board following the passing of Board Member Judy Schriebman late last year. “I am honored and pleased to be on the Board and be able to contribute my knowledge and experience,” he said. “I want to help the LGVSD continue to run an efficient collection system that minimizes sewer spills while providing excellent wastewater treatment.”

He received undergraduate degrees in biology and environmental studies, and a master’s degree in Civil and Sanitary Engineering, from UC Berkeley. He has been a resident of the LGVSD service area for 32 years and served as a member of the Santa Venetia Community Plan Advisory Committee. He currently serves as vice president of the Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association. Gary, and his wife Tes, are parents of of 22-year-old triplet boys; Mitch, Walter, and Ray, who will be graduating from college in May.

Sewer Rate Study Will Guide Board Decision on Sewer Charges

The Board of Directors regularly enlists the service of an outside consultant to conduct a rate study to assess and evaluate the District’s existing rate structure and rate policies, review current methodology, and make recommendations on rate adjustments.

A sewer rate study was recently conducted by Hildebrand Consulting of Oakland. The study provided the Board with the necessary analysis and information to set rates to fund the operating and capital costs, and debt service to pay for the collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater for the next four fiscal years. The rate study took into account all capital program needs and considered all facets of the District’s financial health. Based on identified capital improvement needs and increasing inflationary pressures on the operation and maintenance of the District, rate increases were proposed.

In accordance with Prop. 218 requirements, the Board will hold a public hearing to consider the proposed increase in sewer rates for the next four years. All property owners within the District were mailed a notice with an explanation of the proposed rates, hearing date and time, and instructions for filing a protest prior to the rate hearing. The notice included information about why the proposed rate adjustments are needed and the major capital projects associated with the proposed rate increases.

More information can be found on our District website at www.lgvsd.org/doing-business/rate-info/218-rate-increase/

Public Hearing Scheduled on Proposed Sewer Service Charge Increase

The Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District Board of Directors will hold a public hearing on its proposed 2023-24 through 2026-27 sewer rates.

A formal public hearing on the proposed rates will be held on Friday, June 30, 2023, 4:30 PM in the San Rafael City Schools

Board Room, 310 Nova Albion Way, San Rafael, on the 2nd Floor, in accordance with the requirements of Prop. 218.

A separate notice dated May 9 with details about the Prop. 218 public hearing and proposed rates was mailed to all property owners in the District on May 15.

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Board of Directors

Megan Clark
Ronald Ford
Craig K. Murray
Gary Robards
Crystal J. Yezman

Board Meetings are


held at 4:30 PM on
the first and third
Thursday of each month
at the District offices.

ECRWSS – Postal Customer

District Administration: Curtis Paxton, General Manager

The District received the following certificates:

- District Transparency Certificate of Excellence by the Special District Leadership Foundation for 2022-2025 in recognition of its outstanding efforts to promote transparency and good governance.
- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 2021 was received by Government Finance Officers Association.

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"Replacement of Administration and Operations Building" continued from page 1

Long-term planning is a priority of the Board and is reflected in its commitment to maintaining and upgrading the District's equipment and facilities. The Board understands that projects like these will affect future rates and will have financial impact on residents. But the Board also knows that protecting and improving the District's infrastructure is critical in meeting the goals of providing reliable service and protecting the environment.

In keeping with those goals, the new facilities are being planned to provide a state-of-the-art control room, adequate office space for staff, a laboratory, board room, and public classroom. The buildings will be designed to meet LEED and living building standards, which include solar electricity generation, biogas for heating, and recycled water for landscaping.



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"Upgraded Treatment Plant" continued from page 1

weather January's severe storms is a testament to the District's continued investment in its infrastructure, and its duty to protect public health and the environment. These investments are expensive, and the District's Board of Directors and staff are committed to the prudent management of the public's funds. Credit for the safe operation of the plant during the high-stress storms goes to the District staff who operated the system safely, and are dedicated to providing a high level of service every day.



New Recycled Water Distribution Pump Station

District Evaluates Electric Vehicles to Include in Fleet

With climate change, resilience and the environment in mind, the Board of Directors will begin evaluating how best to integrate electric vehicles (EV) into its fleet of vehicles.

The State of California has mandated that all new cars sold in 2035 and after are zero-emission vehicles. Additionally, the California Air Resources Board is developing Advanced Clean Fleet Regulations which will impact local government vehicle fleets.

As the District replaces its fleet of vehicles, it will be important to consider its EV options while meeting the state mandates.

A timeline for the process has not been set, but the Board is committed to meeting the state mandates and following its stated mission of "protecting public health and the environment by providing effective wastewater collection, treatment, and recycling services."