



MONTARA WATER AND SANITARY DISTRICT AGENDA

For Meeting Of: **April 3, 2025**

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FROM: Clemens Heldmaier, General Manager

SUBJECT: Report and Update Concerning Seal Cove Critical Geotechnical Hazards Area Emergency

At its March 27, 2025, meeting, this Board took several emergency actions related to the Seal Cove Critical Geotechnical Hazards Area, including the adoption of a resolution suspending the competitive bidding requirements and immediate expenditure of funds for emergency repair work. This item provides a status of 1) the emergency work performed and future work to be performed, and 2) the overall condition of emergency in the Seal Cove Area, as required under Public Contract Code Sections 22050 and 20806. This is so that Board may determine whether the situation warrants continuation of the emergency, which it is required to so do at every regular meeting following the emergency declaration.

Staff continue to address land movement and the impact to water and sewer assets in the Seal Cove Area and recommends that the emergency authorization continue. Since the March 27th Declaration of Emergency, staff have:

- Repaired another water leak at the end of Los Banos Street. Staff was able to fix the pipe without heavy equipment and keep customers online.
- Mobilized to relocate the water main in San Lucas near Del Mar, however initial work was delayed by San Mateo County's denial of an encroachment permit. Staff and contractor are remobilizing this week given the District's declaration of emergency and further coordination with the County which has now authorized the work in the public street. This work will relocate the water main in San Lucas mid block - moving the main from the north side to the south side to better protect the main and maintain water service to the nearby fire hydrant.
- Been alerted to the County retagging one property on San Lucas. This property has been receiving water through an above ground connection.
- Distributed an update on the District's Emergency Declaration to all residents in the Seal Cove area. (Draft attached)
- Distributed a letter to property owners with sump or grinder pumps connected to the sewer system. (Draft attached)
- Continued assessment of water main in Ocean Avenue from Madrone to San Lucas. Staff are determining whether to cap this main which would require above ground water service connections for three homes.



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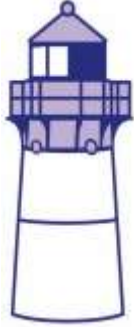
TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- Continued to work with the county regarding geotechnical assessment, and coordination related to District assets, as well as fire hydrants.
- Committed to updating Seal Cove residents regularly through both Board meeting updates and Updates distributed to their properties.

RECOMMENDATION:

MOVE approval determining that the emergency condition still exists and warrants continuing the suspension of competitive bidding and authorizing the expenditures of funds therefor



Montara Water & Sanitary District

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March 31, 2025

Re: Private sewer connections, sump and grinder pumps in the Seal Cove Critical Geotechnical Hazards Area

Dear Property Owner,

The Montara Water and Sanitary District (MWSD) has confirmed recent increased land movement affecting roads, and our water and sewer infrastructure in the Seal Cove Critical Geotechnical Hazards Area, specifically along the Geologic Hazard Zones within 100 feet of the coastal bluff.

Since mid-February, MWSD has responded to 10 water leaks and repaired 8 water leaks on either a District water main or individual property water connections near San Lucas Avenue and Ocean Avenue. Staff are also aware of at least four sewer issues (separations or pump failures) on private sewer assets. This is a clear indication of additional land movement.

This increased land movement may result in impacts to the sewer service to your property. **At this time, MWSD is reminding you to check and properly maintain your sewer lateral, sewer sump and grinder pumps.** There are various privately built sewer assets in this area to address land subsidence that has occurred since the 1970's. Property owners must be vigilant in maintaining these assets to avoid failures.

Seal Cove is an area of documented geologic hazard zones and land movement. In the late 1960's, the U.S. Geological Survey slowed Seal Cove development due to active landsliding and accelerated coastal erosion. San Mateo County froze building construction and authorized a detailed geologic study of the area intended to provide guidelines for future development. The geologic study, completed in 1971, confirmed active landsliding, faulting, and seacliff erosion, and outlined requirements for development in some areas of Seal Cove. Some residential single family home development continued.

In 1980, the County once again commissioned a geologic study and confirmed continued instability and geologic hazards, including approximately 17 homes that had suffered some form of structural damage due to landslide activity. The report further identified 3 geologic hazard zones. Risk for these areas was outlined in the report, including active hazards in Zone 1:

Zone 1 Risk Assessment – UNSTABLE; Risk to development in this zone is considered to be extremely high. It is reasonable to conclude that slow progressive landsliding and seacliff retreat will continue, resulting in structural and property damage. This is especially true for structures or utilities located astride active surface breaks. Rapid catastrophic slope failure of the high, steep

portion of the seacliff located west of Ocean Boulevard is a clear probability. Such an event could involve the loss of life as well as significant property damage. The feasibility of reducing the risk to acceptable levels is extremely low. No additional development should be allowed in this zone.

As part of our responsibility to maintain safe and reliable infrastructure, MWSD has been monitoring the stability of service lines in this known area of geologic hazard. Your property is located in a hazardous zone where ongoing ground movement and erosion pose a serious risk to water and sewer infrastructure. Continued operation of water or sewer service lines in these conditions could lead to:

- Pipeline failures and service interruptions
- Sinkholes or further land destabilization
- Potential environmental contamination from leaks

Given these risks to infrastructure and to MWSD staff working in a geologically active area, MWSD is evaluating the need to cap or relocate additional water mains and sewer mains outside of the geologic hazard zones. This may require property owners to relocate their service connections, maintain above ground service connections, or potentially relocate sump and sewer pumps.

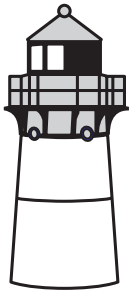
If conditions worsen or if infrastructure is deemed unsafe, MWSD may be required to disconnect or modify service lines to protect public safety and the integrity of the water and sewer systems. The high likelihood of increased leaks and damage to District water and sewer pipelines is unsustainable, and contrary to our mission to protect public health and the environment.

District staff have been actively working with San Mateo County and Coastside Fire Protection District to alert them to these new leaks and land movement. We continue to work with San Mateo County to follow their guidance regarding access and building safety. We have also expressed our concern that the County seek funding opportunities which can support impacted residents.

We understand that this situation may be unsettling and raise concerns for you. We want to work closely with affected property owners to explore potential solutions, including service line relocation or reinforcement where feasible. Please feel free to contact MWSD to discuss your specific property.

For more information or to schedule a meeting with MWSD staff, please contact Clemens Heldmaier at 650-766-6982 or via email at clemens@mwsd.net.

We appreciate your cooperation as we navigate these challenges and prioritize community safety.



Montara Water & Sanitary District

Staying Ahead of our Local Community Needs

Montara Water and Sanitary District (MWSD) works every day to deliver water, garbage and sewer services for the residents of Montara and Moss Beach. Over 6,000 residents rely on our services for their homes and businesses.

March 31, 2025

Seal Cove Critical Geotechnical Hazards Area Resident Update

What Has MWSD Seen Occurring in Seal Cove?

Starting in mid-February, land movement in Seal Cove caused a series of leaks on water and sewer services, and our water mains. This new movement occurred on San Lucas Avenue west of Del Mar Avenue, and Ocean Boulevard between San Lucas and Madrone, in an area of known coastal bluff landslide activity. The Park Street and Beach Street intersection was also affected.

MWSD staff – who are on call 24 hours a day to repair leaks – took quick action to fix these leaks, and also relocate a water connection for 1 home, and provide above ground connections for 2 homes on San Lucas. Above ground connections are a safer means to provide water when land movement can continue to cause leaks. Staff are working to further protect our water and sewer infrastructure in this geologic hazard area, to reduce the potential for any future water or sewage leaks.

All existing Seal Cove customers are connected for both water and sewer services.

MWSD is committed to providing continued updates to our Seal Cove customers, and during MWSD Board Meetings.

MWSD and San Mateo County

MWSD works with San Mateo County in various ways as we operate and maintain MWSD's water and sewer systems.

San Mateo County's Planning and Building Department establishes land use policies and development regulations that protect public health and safety. This includes oversight of County streets and structures on private property.

The County maintains the public streets and rights of way where MWSD infrastructure is located. MWSD must receive an encroachment permit from the County for any work in public streets. MWSD continues to work with the County to address MWSD assets in closed streets in the Seal Cove area.

During this emergency, MWSD is working with the County to identify any grant opportunities that could fund MWSD emergency work, and funding opportunities the County can access to support impacted residents.

MWSD Board Action on March 27

On March 27th, the MWSD Board took several actions to support fast response in the Seal Cove area:

- Declare a District Emergency, which allows for faster contracting and response to emerging issues in the Seal Cove area
- Authorized specialized investigations to assess and recommend safe solutions for Seal Cove water and sewer infrastructure;
- Temporarily suspend issuing new service permits in the Seal Cove Area for 60 days;
- Authorize seeking state and federal financial assistance;
- Submit a letter to the County of San Mateo requesting collaboration and assistance; and requesting the County proclaim a local emergency, and thus help secure additional financial assistance, if available.

These actions are the standard means for a public agency to rapidly respond to emergencies.

History of Land Movement

Since the 1960's there have been numerous, geotechnical studies of the Seal Cove area by San Mateo County, the land use authority for this area.

Study started in the 1960's, when the U.S. Geological Survey slowed Seal Cove development due to active landsliding and accelerated coastal erosion. In 1971 and 1984 San Mateo County studies confirmed continued instability and geologic hazards. Structural damage due to landslide activity has been documented throughout this time.

MWSD is reviewing existing County geotechnical reports to determine a plan to safeguard MWSD water and sewer infrastructure.

MWSD is committed to providing safe public access via ZOOM teleconference for our regularly scheduled public meetings.

Board Meetings on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at 8888 Cabrillo Highway, Montara.

Call: (650) 728-3545

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Visit: mwsd.montara.org