

Top Frequently Asked Questions

1. When did Valley Water Board of Directors decide whether to place a renewal on the ballot?

On July 21, 2020, the Valley Water Board of Directors voted unanimously to place the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program renewal measure on the November 3, 2020 ballot.

2. What is the exact ballot measure language on the Nov 3, 2020 ballot related to Safe, Clean Water Program?

Measure S

Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program

Shall the measure to renew the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program which ensures public health and safety by:

- protecting drinking water supply, dams from earthquakes and climate change;
- reducing pollution, toxins and contaminants in waterways; and
- providing flood protection;

by renewing Santa Clara Valley Water District's existing parcel tax without increasing rates, averaging \$.006 per square foot annually as described in Resolution 20-64 until ended by voters, raising approximately \$45,500,000 annually, with qualifying senior exemption, annual audits, independent citizen oversight be adopted?

3. What are the six priorities for the renewed Safe, Clean Water Program?

- Ensure a Safe, Reliable Water Supply.
- Reduce Toxins, Hazards and Contaminants in our Waterways.
- Protect Our Water Supply from Earthquakes and Natural Disasters.
- Restore Wildlife Habitat and Provide Open Space.
- Provide Flood Protection to Homes, Businesses, Schools, and Highways.
- Support Public Health and Public Safety for Our Community.

4. Is this a new tax?

No, it is not a new tax. Measure S renews and extends the existing parcel tax that was previously approved by 74% of voters in 2012, without raising new taxes.

5. How much will the renewal program raise in funding for local water projects?

The revenue from the measure will generate \$45.5 million a year, and \$682.5 million over the first 15 years of the program (uninflated).

6. What percentage of voters need to vote yes to pass this measure?

The measure requires a 2/3 yes vote (66.7%) to pass.

7. When would Measure S go into effect if it is passed in November 2020?

The measure would replace the existing program and go into effect on July 1, 2021.

8. Is there an exception for senior citizens?

Yes, there is a senior exemption for qualifying seniors just like in the current program.

9. Is there independent citizen's oversight?

Yes, there is an independent citizen's oversight committee that reviews annual expenditures and progress, including review of annual reports.

10. Where can I access the existing program's previous annual reports and audits?

For the existing program's previous annual reports, implementation plans and audits, please visit our programmatic webpage on Valley Water at: <https://www.valleywater.org/project-updates/safe-clean-water-and-natural-flood-protection-program/safe-clean-water-program-archive>

11. Why is Valley Water considering a Safe, Clean Water Program renewal now?

A renewal of the Safe, Clean Water program in 2020 is necessary because it provides consistent funding to ensure reliable drinking water supplies, flood protection, and environmental restoration now and into the future. Climate change is also a major issue that we need to start planning for and addressing right now, not in the distant future. With a historic 5-year drought, one of the largest flood events in recent history, and severe wildfires getting worse in just the last few years, the effects of climate change are being felt by us all. These challenges require sustainable and long-term funding to operate, maintain and upgrade our water supply and flood protection infrastructure, while protecting the environment. Like owning and maintaining a home, public infrastructure must be maintained to provide the reliability, safety and security you expect.

12. What does the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection program do?

- Ensures a safe, reliable water supply by upgrading dams, pipelines and other infrastructure, and through grants and partnerships with community organizations.
- Reduces toxins, hazards, and contaminants in our waterways through pollution prevention, legacy pollutant and homeless encampment cleanups and supporting volunteer creek clean-up efforts.
- Protects our water supply from earthquakes and natural disasters through an early flood warning system and the Anderson Dam seismic retrofit project.
- Restores wildlife habitat through revegetation projects, revitalizing habitats, improving fish habitat and passage and partnering for the conservation of habitat lands.
- Provides flood protection to homes, businesses, schools, and highways, through vegetation and sediment management in channels, planning for emergencies, and implementing a variety of flood risk reduction projects.
- Provides support for public health and public safety of our community.

13. How were priorities under this renewal determined?

More than 21,000 community members were engaged through a six-month public engagement process that included many various stakeholders, community partners and local residents. Their engagement and feedback through community input surveys, meetings, forums, and focus groups helped solidify the community's top priorities, which are reflected in the Community-Preferred Program Report (<https://safecleanwater.org/571-2/>).

14. What is the duration of the Safe, Clean Water Program?

Under the program renewal, the program would remain in effect until ended by voters or ended by the Valley Water Board of Directors, which includes a Public Reassessment Process every 15 years, which will include public input from both residents and stakeholders.

15. What kind of accountability and transparency measures are built into the program?

To ensure the Program is accountable and transparent the following measures are included:

- Independent citizen's oversight (i.e. Independent Monitoring Committee)
- 5-Year independent external audits
- Board meetings and public hearings if any adjustments are required to the Program
- Quarterly website updates
- 15-year Public Reassessment Process to include going back to the community to ensure the Program is meeting the priorities and needs of the public

16. What will be the cost to property owners?

For FY 2021, the minimum special tax is set at \$67.67/year (averaging \$0.006 per square foot) for single family homes one quarter acre or less. To account for inflation, the Board may vote each year and opt to escalate rates by 2% or Consumer Price Index (CPI).

17. Do apartments, condominiums and townhomes have the same tax rate as single family homes?

No. Apartments, condominiums and townhomes pay significantly less than single family homes.

18. Do lots less than a quarter acre in size pay the same rate?

There is a minimum charge for single family residential parcels of one quarter acre or less, however larger single-family residential parcels pay a higher parcel tax, if more than a quarter acre.

19. How can we be sure funds will be spent as promised?

As with previous funding measures, this local funding can only be spent in Santa Clara County to meet the specific purposes contained in the measure enabling the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection program and cannot be taken by the State. Ongoing program reporting and monitoring, and oversight by an Independent Monitoring Committee made up of community representatives, ensure that program activities and expenditures are all conducted with full transparency.

20. Is local funding necessary to meet these goals?

Yes, reliable local funding is necessary to address climate change impacts and fund community-preferred projects, including related maintenance and operations costs. Funding also provides a local funding match to receive federal or state partner funding when available.

21. Will Safe, Clean Water Program funding be spent on the Bay-Delta Tunnel Project?

No. The Safe, Clean Water Program consists of local dollars for local projects only.

22. What is Valley Water doing to support encampment cleanups along the creeks?

Valley Water is proposing a significant increase in funding with over \$38 million dedicated to support encampment cleanups and the unhoused population, including \$500,000 per year in cost share with other agencies for services related to encampment cleanups.

23. What new projects are included in the renewal that are not in the existing 2012 program?

In addition to updating projects in the 2012 program, the following new projects would be included:

- Pacheco Reservoir Expansion (\$10M)
- Water Conservation Rebates and Programs (\$7.9M)
- Green Stormwater Infrastructure (\$1.5M)
- Invasive plant species removal (e.g. Arundo Donax) countywide (\$7.5M)
- Lower Berryessa Flood Protection (\$8.2M)
- Sustainable creek infrastructure for continued public safety (\$7.5M)
- Expanded Grant and Partnership opportunities (\$53.1M)

24. How might the pandemic impact future Valley Water's Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Programs?

While the current pandemic and other current and future public emergencies may cause short-term delays on some projects, Valley Water will continue to provide services as an essential service provider. Funding from the Safe, Clean Water Program helps to ensure that funding is available to continue essential services such as a reliable water supply, improved flood protection, and enhanced natural resources, before, during and after such emergencies. In addition, Valley Water is actively pursuing federal funding for our infrastructure projects through COVID19 stimulus bills, regular appropriations, and other legislation to supplement state and local funds and help stimulate our region's economy.

25. What specific projects are covered by bonding for the Safe, Clean Water Program?

If bonding against the tax were pursued, all capital construction projects under the renewal program would be candidates for upfront funding via debt financing. Bonding makes it possible to achieve capital projects earlier than a pay as you go program and leaves room to implement other projects (such as environmental stewardship activities) earlier in the program. It also saves money in terms of starting projects now instead of waiting to start in the future, for which construction and inflation costs would go up each year.

26. How successful has the 2012 Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program been?

Examples of successes under the 2012 Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program include:

Under Priority A:

- Main and Madrone Avenue Pipelines Restoration project upgraded.
- Installation of more than 50 hydration stations (water bottle filling stations) in collaboration with local schools.

Under Priority B:

- Encampment Cleanups and other channel clean ups have far exceeded the program's goals.

Under Priority C:

- Developed and implemented an automated flood warning system that uses real-time rainfall data to predict stream flows and potential flood risk.

Under Priority D:

- Removal of approximately 63 acres of invasive exotic plants above Lexington Reservoir, lower Guadalupe River, Stevens Creek, Saratoga Creek, and South San Francisco Bay.
- Gravel augmentation and large woody debris placement for fisheries habitat.

Under Priority E:

- Completed Upper Berryessa Creek flood protection.
- Completed Calabazas Creek flood protection.
- Completed San Francisquito Creek flood protection (S.F. Bay to Highway 101 portion).
- Completed McKelvey Park Detention Basin as part of Permanente Creek flood protection.

Additional project details for the current 2012 Safe, Clean Water Program can be found at <https://www.valleywater.org/project-updates/safe-clean-water-and-natural-flood-protection-program/>

27. Why is the special parcel tax designed as until ended by voters and not a 15-year measure?

Providing safe, clean water, flood protection and environmental stewardship is crucial to sustain our economy, environment, and quality of life. These essential services require ongoing, sustainable funding well beyond what a short-term 15-year program could provide.

Sustainable funding is needed to address reoccurring droughts, earthquakes, flooding and the growing homeless encampment issues near our creeks. These are permanent threats that require long-term planning and ongoing operations and maintenance into the future. Droughts, flooding, wildfires, heatwaves and power shutoffs are all prime examples of climate change impacts that affect our community. All of these issues require solutions that are sustainable over the long run.

In order to ensure a reliable water supply, a long-term funding solution is required to protect taxpayer investments so that our public infrastructure doesn't degrade over time. Also, the parcel tax can be either ended by voters, or by the Board of Directors through a required 15-year Public Reassessment Process, meaning the board must affirmatively vote to either maintain, reduce or end the tax following community and stakeholder input every 15 years.