City of Watsonville
Investing In Our Water System

Water is one of the essentials of life!
The City of Watsonville is dedicated to providing our customers with safe and reliable water at the lowest rates in the region, and has done so for over 80 years.

Every day we pump, treat, test and deliver nearly 7 million gallons of water from our local groundwater wells and creeks! You get clean potable water on-demand for pennies per gallon.

Aging water pipelines and new State drinking water regulations are posing financial challenges to our community’s water system. Over 65,000 customers throughout Watsonville, Corralitos, and Freedom depend on our water system.

OUR AGING WATER PIPES

Our aging infrastructure is in critical need. Over half of the City’s water pipes are over 50 years old and are coming to the end of their expected lifespan. Our goal is to increase water main replacement to a rate of 2 to 3 miles per year to minimize breaks, service disruptions, and water loss.

Recent rate increases have funded water main replacement at a rate of 1 mile per year. Increasing our replacement rate to 2 to 3 miles per year would allow us to catch up with our aging infrastructure in 10 years as opposed to managing 30 years of costly breaks and leaks.

The cost to maintain our pipes and wells continues to rise as the cost of materials and electricity increase. Replacing water mains costs about $750,000 per mile. Additionally, our water revenue decreases during a drought, even though our water system must keep working 24-hours a day.

The City is pursuing grants to help with these costs. It will take more than just grants to keep up with this serious infrastructure need.
In 2014, California became the first state to set a drinking water regulation specifically for chromium-6 (Cr6+). The State has found that prolonged exposure to high levels of Cr6+ has potential health risks.

In some cases, man-made sources of Cr6+ enter the water through industrial processes. That is not the case in Watsonville. In our region, and many areas throughout California, Cr6+ is an element that naturally exists in the soil and rock layers surrounding our groundwater wells. Chromium in the rock and soil then dissolves into the groundwater around it.

Our Water Division is working hard to meet the new standard as quickly and economically as possible. This includes testing and analysis of the best treatment systems to reduce Cr6+. Of our 12 wells, the 8 wells most affected are testing at an average of about 13 parts per billion of chromium-6.

This new state regulation affects over 300 water providers and their customers across California. The City is looking for grants to lessen the financial burden on our ratepayers. However, there is not enough grant funding available to cover all of the costs. A rate increase will likely be necessary to help pay for this unfunded State regulation.

In Watsonville, the estimated cost of these new treatment systems is approximately $20 million, plus an additional $750,000 per year to operate.

Chromium-3 (Cr3+) is a dietary supplement, chromium-6 (Cr6+) is a health risk. The State now regulates Cr6+ separately. One part per billion (ppb) is equivalent to 1 drop of water in an Olympic-sized pool.

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HOW ARE WATER NEEDS FUNDED?

It takes a combination of grants, loans and your water service bill to maintain our city’s water system.

The City is working on a water rate analysis to determine how we as a community will be able to finance these critical projects to keep our water system reliable and safe. Our City council will be considering these rate options in the coming months.

In 2014-15, the City secured over $3.2 million in grants and is searching for loans to help fund water projects.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

The City of Watsonville takes pride in nearly a century of high-quality water service. Dedicated staff and an elaborate water system deliver 2.5 billion gallons of safe drinking water to your homes and businesses each year.

Despite the challenges, Watsonville will find ways to keep providing our community with safe, reliable drinking water for today and the future – because our water is worth it!