

Transparency, access and accountability

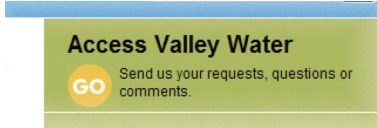
What is “transparency?”

In government, transparency is the opposite of secrecy; an activity is transparent if all information about it is open and freely available. Transparency is seen as a means of holding public officials and agencies accountable. When government meetings are open to the media and the public, when budgets and financial statements may be reviewed by anyone, when laws, rules and decisions are open to discussion, they are seen as transparent. The Santa Clara Valley Water District strives to be a transparent, accessible agency that is fully accountable to the community it serves.

How accessible is the staff at the water district?

We still believe in the human touch. Receptionists staff the water district’s headquarters main lobby at 5750 Almaden Expressway, San Jose, CA 95118 from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Our main phone number is: **(408) 265-2600**.

The water district also has an online customer service center designed to facilitate our speedy response to your inquiries, concerns, or kudos called **Access Valley Water**. Go to our website at www.valleywater.org and click here. Follow the three-step process and a staff person will be assigned to respond to you within three days.



Access Valley Water
Send us your requests, questions or comments.

Where can the public get information on products, projects and services?

If there is a water district project or facility in your neighborhood, community meetings and open houses are often held to share information with neighbors and get their feedback, ideas or concerns. If you live near a creek, there’s a good chance you have received a notice about sediment removal or bank

repair work being conducted in your neighborhood creek to reduce the occurrence of winter flooding. If you are a well owner, you have received an invitation to an open house and information about groundwater quality. Neighbors of our drinking water treatment plants receive winter and summer plant operations updates. These materials are available in multiple languages upon request.

You can get information on these and other infrastructure, flood protection, stream stewardship and environmental restoration projects at www.valleywater.org. Our web site is continuously updated with recent mailings, informative publications, detailed reports, and news about the district’s projects, programs, services and finances.

A monthly e-newsletter, **Valley Water e-news**, is also available by clicking on the envelope icon on the district’s webpage. We are also active on social media.



How can the public be a part of the policy and decision making process?

The district is governed by a seven-member board of directors. The Board of Directors normally meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at the water district headquarters to discuss water policy and resources management issues.

The board agenda and supporting materials are posted ten days in advance so the public has sufficient notice to review the materials and attend the meeting, if they so choose. The district is one of very few water agencies that broadcasts its board meetings on the internet and these broadcasts are also accessible in a web archive. In addition, a three-month Board Planning Calendar is reviewed in open session so the public can be aware, well in advance, of issues scheduled to come before the board.

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Sometimes, the board meets at a location that's more convenient for a particular constituency. For example, annual hearings on South County water rates are alternately held in Morgan Hill and Gilroy.

In addition, the water district has nine Board Advisory Committees, consisting of a total of 120 community volunteers who advise the board of directors on a range of policy and operational matters.

The **Environmental Advisory Committee** advises the board in developing and recommending policies for environmental restoration and enhancement and environmental policy, in general.

The **Agricultural Water Advisory Committee** advises the board in developing and recommending policies regarding water supply for agricultural uses.

The **Landscape Advisory Committee** advises the board in developing and recommending policies for water conservation and providing a link between Santa Clara County's landscape industry and the board.

Five geographically based **Flood Protection and Watershed Advisory Committees**, advise the board in developing and recommending policies for flood protection and stream stewardship in the valley's five watersheds.

The **Santa Clara Valley Water Commission** assists the board in developing and recommending policies for water supply and water quality as well as in the annual review of groundwater charges.

These meetings are noticed in advance on our website and are open to the public. If you are interested in serving on any of these committees,

Contact us

For more information, contact **Teresa Alvarado** at **(408) 265-2607, ext. 3081**, or **TAlvarado@valleywater.org**

please contact the Clerk of the Board hotline:
(408) 265-2607, ext. 2277.

How is the district held accountable to the public?

As stewards of public funds, the water district's top priority is meeting the community's drinking water, stream stewardship and flood protection needs in a cost effective and efficient manner. Maintaining and exceeding these standards in the future will require vigilance, planning, preparedness and organizational excellence.

As an example, in November of 2000, the voters of Santa Clara County supported a special parcel tax measure entitled the Clean, Safe Creeks and Natural Flood Protection Plan. The plan promised four major outcomes to be completed over the course of a 15-year period.

To ensure accountability to the voters, the ballot measure also created an **Independent Monitoring Committee** to annually review the implementation of the intended results of the plan and report its findings to the Board. The Independent Monitoring Committee meetings are publicly noticed, open to the public, and its annual report is available on the district's website.

Measuring and improving the performance of our organization is also essential to efficiently delivering needed services. The district has achieved certification from the International Organization for Standardization for both Quality Management (ISO 9001) and Environmental Management (ISO 14001), making us the first and now, one of the only two water agencies in the state to achieve ISO certification.

Many aspects of the water district's operations are periodically evaluated, analyzed or audited. Management audits and other performance reports are available to the public at: www.valleywater.org/About/TransparencyAccountability.aspx

For information about accessing public records, go to www.valleywater.org/PublicRecords.aspx

The Santa Clara Valley Water District manages an integrated water resources system that includes the supply of clean, safe water, flood protection and stewardship of streams on behalf of Santa Clara County's 1.8 million residents. The district effectively manages 10 dams and surface water reservoirs, three water treatment plants, a state-of-the-art water quality laboratory, nearly 400 acres of groundwater recharge ponds and more than 275 miles of streams. We provide wholesale water and groundwater management services to local municipalities and private water retailers who deliver drinking water directly to homes and businesses throughout Santa Clara County.