

RUSSIAN RIVER

**CAG
FACT
SHEET**

Monte Rio/Villa Grande Wastewater Solutions Pilot Project Lower Russian River Wastewater Citizens Advisory Group (CAG)

What is the CAG?

The Lower Russian River Wastewater Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) is a group of nine residents engaged with efforts to develop sustainable and affordable wastewater solutions for communities in the lower Russian River area to help improve local water quality and meet the new State and County requirements.

The CAG's Two Primary Roles

- 1 Communicating with and advising the Interagency Team (IT) that is coordinating regulatory and implementation efforts, including a wastewater treatment improvement pilot project for the Monte Rio Villa Grande area, and
- 2 Supporting citizens in understanding how the pilot project's wastewater solutions, in combination with the new regulations, might impact them.

The CAG's Four Areas of Focus:

Advocacy

Advocating for people, resources, solutions, and support/assistance (funding, political will, direct assistance to individuals, a range of alternatives)

Influence

Working with the County and State to heighten awareness and the need for priority on the issue with the state/county staff and elected officials. Focus on getting the county more deeply engaged and increasing its participation and engagement.

Collaboration

Working with the project consultant(s) and implementation partners. Provide advice on all aspects of the MR/VG Pilot project.

Communications

Communicating with the public and community. Provide easy access to minutes and relevant documents. Includes Website. Press releases, updates to elected officials and others. Help with community events. Help develop and support a communications strategy.

Contact:
michael.makdisi@sonoma-county.org



Lower Russian River Citizens Advisory Group

Key Accomplishments

The Lower Russian River Wastewater Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) is a group of nine residents engaged with efforts to develop sustainable and affordable wastewater solutions for communities in the lower Russian River area to help improve local water quality and meet the new State and County requirements.

1. Made presentations on the CAG's work to the Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council and the State and Regional Water Quality Control Boards.
2. Participated in the selection process to identify consultant(s) for the ongoing feasibility study of potential wastewater solutions and implementation for Monte Rio/Villa Grande.
3. Provided input to the role and selection of the Ombudsperson, responsible for supporting county residents in understanding and complying with wastewater regulations.
4. Worked with regulators to address what owners of septic systems can do if their septic systems fail or need improvement while broader solutions are being identified and implemented.
5. Introduced our issues to State and Federal elected and agency officials and requested their support in broadening acceptable solutions and identifying funding sources.
6. Hosted tours for Regional Board and Sonoma Water staff of the area to familiarize leadership with the scope and scale of the issues.
7. Met with representatives of the Board of Supervisors (BOS) and encouraged a county-wide approach to wastewater; this resulted in the BOS budgeting a \$350K allocation of county funds to better understand the scale of the issue county-wide and creating a full-time, county-wide, permanent clean water program analyst and ombudsperson's position.
8. Pushed for a more generous interpretation of the State OWTS (Onsite Wastewater Treatment System) Policy in the County OWTS Manual and influenced technical language in the State Board's LAMP (Local Area Management Program) and the county's OWTS manual including the definition of a "Qualified Inspector" of individual septic systems.

CAG Members

- Brenda Adelman (Rio Nido), Russian River Watershed Protection Committee
- Kyla Brooke (Villa Grande), Realtor, President Emeritus of Friends of Villa Grande
- Dan Fein (Monte Rio), Technology Consultant
- Rich Holmer (Villa Grande), Retired Septic System Consultant
- Brian Grant (Monte Rio), Project Coordinator with Praxis Architects
- Steve Mack (Forestville), Retired General Manager of Sweetwater Springs Water District
- Steve Trippe (Monte Rio), Retired Non-Profit Executive
- Sarah Yardley (Hacienda), Retired Civil Engineer
- Eric Schanz, General Manager of Sweetwater Springs Water District
- Cynthia Strecker (Ad-Hoc Member), Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Group

CAG Meetings

CAG meetings are usually held the fourth Thursday of each month from 6-8 p.m. Since COVID-19, meetings have been held exclusively online by Zoom. Members of the public are welcome to attend. For more information on how to participate in an upcoming Zoom meeting, please contact Ombudsman Michael Makdisi at Michael.Makdisi@Sonoma-County.org.