



County of Santa Cruz



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Press Release

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WATER STATUS REPORT HIGHLIGHTS PREPARATION EFFORTS FOR CHANGING CLIMATE

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY –The 2023 annual Santa Cruz County Water Resources Status Report for the period October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023 was approved by the Board of Supervisors on January 30, 2024.

The 2023 Water Status Reports reflects the impacts of, and ongoing preparation for, “whiplash weather.” This term was coined to describe the increased variability in which we receive precipitation. 2022 and 2023 showcased volatile and unprecedented rain patterns, which varied from intense drought to severe floods.

“Santa Cruz County’s Water Resources Program, in collaboration with regional agencies and non-profit organizations across the county, are taking action and implementing projects to ensure that the future will bring a secure source of water supply for residents and protection for the environment,” said Sierra Ryan, Water Resource Manager for County of Santa Cruz Environmental Health.

Report highlights:

- A three-year dry period was ended dramatically by two series of back-to-back atmospheric rivers in January and March that resulted in flooding throughout the County. Rainfall totals ended the year at 160% of normal.
- Total municipal water use reached its lowest level since 1984 due to a combination of a wet winter and spring, a relatively cool summer, and permanent water efficiency measures put in place during the last droughts.
- A major issue that emerged during this water year was the prevalence and persistence of cyanobacterial blooms across Santa Cruz County. Cyanobacteria can release toxins into the environment that are harmful to people and pets who are exposed to the water. Santa Cruz County Environmental Health staff will continue to lead water quality testing efforts and post health risk advisories as necessary.



Read the full report findings: me-qr.com/I/SCC2023water

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Environmental Health Mission Statement:

Environmental Health Division of the Health Services Agency is committed to the protection of public health and the environment within Santa Cruz County through oversight, inspection, monitoring, permitting, investigation, enforcement, information management, education, and collaboration, while providing excellent customer service.