



News Release

South Tahoe Public Utility District
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OPINON: 2022 Highlights from Your Water and Sewer District

South Lake Tahoe, CA (December 22, 2022) – South Tahoe Public Utility District works 24/7 to provide our mountain community with delicious Tahoe tap, water for fire suppression, and reliable wastewater services. As you lit candles and huddled around the fireplace during the big snowstorms this December, you were able to flush the toilet, take showers, and wash dishes without issue. Providing reliable water and sewer services in our sensitive environment is challenging and would not be possible without our dedicated and skilled staff. With 2023 right around the corner, I want to take a minute to look back on your water and sewer district’s accomplishments this year and look ahead to next year.

Fire Readiness – In the aftermath of the Caldor Fire, the District continued to push the pace on fire preparedness and grant activity. The District received \$1.6 million in grants through FEMA for fire recovery and to install emergency backup power, with another \$5.9 million on the way. We completed hazardous fuels reduction on 100 acres surrounding the wastewater treatment plant with funding through California Tahoe Conservancy. With over 80 water and sewer field facilities, current grants from the Conservancy and USFS will help us develop a fuel reduction and facility hardening plan for implementation next year. Working with the City of South Lake Tahoe, we secured American Rescue Plan funds to install 37 new fire hydrants in City limits. For the first time ever, water agencies in the Tahoe Basin received federal funding through the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act to upgrade infrastructure for fire suppression. Fire doesn’t care about political boundaries, and we continue to work with regional water districts, the League to Save Lake Tahoe, and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to leverage state and federal funds. In total, the District received an additional \$4.9 million in grants to protect our community from wildfire.

Community Partnerships – We continue to work with partners to tackle some of the greatest challenges facing our communities. With the Board’s guidance, we changed the sewer connection fee structure to make it more equitable. This change lowers the cost to build affordable housing, saving projects like Sugar Pine Village over \$1 million. As our Board continues to prioritize sustainability, efficiency, and reliability, we are proud to be an integral part of the South Tahoe Zero Emissions District and support climate forward actions.

Proactive Planning and Implementation – With most of our water and sewer systems built in the 1950s and 60s, we continue to upgrade aging assets before they become emergency projects. We implemented a system-wide fire hydrant assessment and replacement program and advanced our assessment of sewer lines, manholes, electrical instrumentation, valves, and stream crossings to identify the most cost-effective and timely method to replace and repair these facilities. We placed more



computer tablets in the hands of field staff to connect people with system analytics to improve efficiency and make better informed decisions while reducing drive time and greenhouse gas emissions. Our grants program is instrumental in connecting needed projects with state and federal funds - moving critical capital projects forward while keeping costs affordable.

Looking Ahead – This February we are transitioning from quarterly to monthly billing to make it easier for customers to budget. A 1MW solar array is planned for construction at the wastewater treatment plant this summer to offset one-third of the plants’ energy demands. We are working with the Tahoe Keys to identify the best approach for providing community-wide water resources and fire protection. With over \$1.2 billion in aging sewer assets, we continue to rehabilitate our largest sewer pumps and upgrade infrastructure at the wastewater treatment plant to protect our sensitive environment from sewer spills. We are upsizing waterlines and installing fire hydrants in the Heavenly Valley and Black Bart neighborhoods this summer to better prepare our community for fire. We will be working with our local and regional partners to bring even more funding into the basin to accelerate the pace and scale of water system upgrades for fire protection.

This would not have been possible without the critical support and direction from our Board. As your elected officials, they continue to direct our high performance, customer-service oriented work force to innovate and seek cost-effective solutions. It has been an impressive and productive year for the District in many areas, and I look forward to working with you, our community partners, and the Board of Directors to build on these successes in 2023.

John Thiel, General Manager South Tahoe Public Utility District

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