



SOUTH TAHOE PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT  
**RECYCLED WATER  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

**Frequently Asked Questions  
Updated August 2023**

1. Why is the South Tahoe Public Utility District (District) developing a Recycled Water Strategic Plan (RWSP)?

The District has been exporting recycled water to Alpine County since 1967. At that time, options for using recycled water were fairly limited. Since then, there have been significant advances in the treatment and use of recycled water in California.

The objective of the RWSP is to develop a long-term (50-year) strategic plan to determine the most cost-effective, innovative, and environmentally conscious way to manage its recycled water in the future. The District is identifying various alternatives to be closely evaluated. Pending future drivers, constraints, and/or opportunities, the District may implement some of these alternatives in the future.

2. What is the difference between a Strategic Plan and a Master Plan?

A Strategic Plan will provide the District with a suite of alternatives that may be further explored and implemented in response to changing conditions for its recycled water over the next 50 years. Master Plans typically have a timeframe of 20 to 25 years and include specific capital improvement projects with high-level costs that are phased over the duration of plan.

3. Is the District required to prepare a Recycled Water Strategic Plan?

No, it is not required to prepare a Recycled Water Strategic Plan.

The District wants to remain proactive in identifying alternatives for its recycled water, in order to be prepared and ready in response to a variety of factors that can change. Changing conditions may include regulatory provisions, interagency agreements, opportunities to improve various aspects of the existing system, advances in recycled water treatment technology, etc. One changing condition in the near term is that the existing agreements with ranchers will expire in 2028 and the District will need to have a plan in place to know the best way forward.

In the RWSP, the District is considering maintaining and extending the life of the existing system as an alternative that will be evaluated. Any alternative besides the existing system would require permitting, public notification, design, and construction – all of which take years to implement.

4. Does the RWSP planning process follow any related regulatory code or guideline requirements? If so, what are the regulatory code and/or guidelines relevant to the RWSP?

No, the RWSP planning process does not follow any related regulatory code or guideline requirements for the development of strategic plans by public agencies, as there are no such requirements.

However, each alternative identified in the RWSP also includes regulatory requirements needed to implement that alternative.

5. At the end of this process, will the RWSP need to be formally adopted by the District Board? If so, will a public hearing be required?

No, the RWSP will not need to be formally adopted by the District Board, although it may be adopted to facilitate future decision making. A public hearing is not required. However, public input is being sought throughout the RWSP development phase. The RWSP planning team will continue to update both the District Board and the public on the RWSP and is conducting public outreach to receive feedback.

6. What is the Porter-Cologne Act and how does it pertain to/impact the development of the District's Recycled Water Strategic Plan?

The Porter-Cologne Act of 1970 (Porter-Cologne Act) mandated export of wastewater out of the Lake Tahoe Basin by 1972. The Porter-Cologne Act would need to be modified to allow discharge of any recycled water in the Lake Tahoe Watershed. An amendment to the Porter-Cologne Act would require approval by the California Legislature.

7. Why is recycled water exported out of the Lake Tahoe Basin?

In 1962 the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB) adopted Resolution 58-1, which prohibits discharge of treated domestic sewage into Lake Tahoe. The District began exporting recycled water to Alpine County in 1967 to comply with this Resolution as well as the Porter-Cologne Act.

8. Will the District be making changes to existing operations in the near term (next 5 years)?

The District plans to continue maintaining and making upgrades to its existing recycled water facilities over the next 5 years. Specifically, the District has included

the following projects related to its recycled water system in its most recent (2022) Capital Improvement Program and its Recycled Water Facilities Master Plan:

Diamond Ditch Rehabilitation, 2025/2026  
Diamond Valley Road Improvements, 2023 through 2032  
Dressler Ditch Erosion Control, 2023  
Flood Irrigation/Emergency Containment Areas, tbd  
Luther Pass Pump Station Tank Coating and Cathodic Protection, 2023/2024  
Luther Pass Pump Station Fuel Tank, 2024  
Luther Pass Pump Station Pump Efficiency Monitoring, 2024  
Luther Pass Pump Station Fire Pump Control Improvements, 2023

Although the District has the projects listed above in its Capital Improvement Program and in its Recycled Water Facilities Master Plan, the list of projects involves an ongoing process of reviewing vulnerabilities in the existing system and these projects are subject to change. For more information about these projects, the Capital Improvement Program can be found on the District's website: <https://stpud.us/customers/improvements/> .

9. What has the District done to increase the amount of energy recovery from the existing export system?

In 2018, a hydroelectric plant was installed on the recycled water export line which can produce 381,000 kilowatts/year in hydroelectricity, as recycled water flows from the top of Luther Pass down into Alpine County.

10. What alternatives are the District evaluating for consideration in the RWSP?

The Alternatives Identification and Screening Process evaluated 16 alternatives for consideration:

- Alt 1 – Existing System
- Alt 2 – Expanded Secondary Recycled Water Delivery in Alpine County
- Alt 3 – Expanded Disinfected Tertiary Reuse in Alpine County
- Alt 4 – Discharge to West Fork of Carson River and Use in Nevada
- Alt 5 – Groundwater Recharge for Disposal in Alpine County
- Alt 6 – Expanded Class A or B Reuse in Nevada
- Alt 7 – Effluent Conveyance to Douglas County Lake Tahoe Sewer Authority (DCLTSA)
- Alt 8 – Discharge to South Fork American River Watershed
- Alt 9 – Conveyance to Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency (T-TSA) for subsurface discharge to Truckee River
- Alt 10 – Land Application (Landscape Irrigation) in Tahoe Basin
- Alt 11 – Land Application (Snowmaking) in Tahoe Basin
- Alt 12 – Discharge to Waters in Tahoe Basin (Heavenly Valley Creek)
- Alt 13 – Discharge to Waters in Tahoe Basin (Trout Creek)

- Alt 14 – Discharge to Waters in Tahoe Basin (Upper Truckee River)
- Alt 15 – Indirect Potable Reuse in Tahoe Basin
- Alt 16 – Direct Potable Reuse in Tahoe Basin

11. Is an alternative involving “toilet to tap” being considered? Why / or why not?

The two alternatives (Alt 15 and Alt 16) involving “toilet to tap” have been ruled out at this time due to many factors including regulatory requirements, high treatment and construction costs, and the environmental impacts of the treatment processes.

12. Which alternatives are going to be considered for further evaluation, as of June 2023?

The following alternatives will be further evaluated in the Alternatives Evaluation phase:

- Alt 1 – Existing System
- Alt 2 – Expanded Secondary Recycled Water Delivery in Alpine County
- Alt 3 – Expanded Disinfected Tertiary Reuse in Alpine County
- Alt 4 – Discharge to West Fork of Carson River and Use in Nevada
- Alt 6 – Expanded Class A or B Reuse in Nevada
- Alt 7 – Effluent Conveyance to DCLTSA

13. Where can I view the alternatives?

The “Public Meetings” section of the project webpage includes a recording and a PowerPoint presentation with alternatives information. The meeting on Tuesday May 23, 2023, shows the alternatives that were considered. <https://stpud.us/recycled-water-strategic-plan/upcoming-public-meetings-rwsp/>

14. What is the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary treatment?

Primary treatment of wastewater uses physical processes like filtration and settling to remove solids, including grit, debris, oil, grease, scum, and some lighter solids.

Secondary treatment of wastewater applies biological processes, such as aeration and activated sludge treatment, to break down dissolved and suspended biosolids.

Tertiary treatment of wastewater typically involves a combination of physical and chemical processes to remove dissolved substances, such as color, metals, organic chemicals, and nutrients. Some tertiary treatment processes include membrane filtration such as reverse osmosis (RO), advanced oxidation (such as ozone or UV), and biological nutrient removal. The tertiary treatment processes utilized for a given alternative depend on the water quality requirements for the treated water.

15. Of the alternatives considered for further evaluation, which alternatives will require treatment plant upgrades?

The District's existing treatment plant produces advanced disinfected secondary treated wastewater. (See definition above). Therefore, both of the following alternatives will not require treatment plant upgrades:

- Alt 1 – Existing System
- Alt 2 – Expanded Secondary Recycled Water Delivery in Alpine County

However, the following alternatives would require treatment plant upgrades to meet the end use requirements of the recycled water:

- Alt 3 – Expanded Disinfected Tertiary Reuse in Alpine County
  - i. Tertiary filtration.
- Alt 4 – Discharge to West Fork of Carson River and Use in Nevada
  - i. Depends on the discharge approach – may include nutrient, total dissolved solids, and chloride removal.
- Alt 6 – Expanded Class A or B Reuse in Nevada
  - i. Depends on the discharge approach and location – may include tertiary filtration, as well as nutrient, total dissolved solids, and chloride removal.
- Alt 7 – Effluent Conveyance to Douglas County Lake Tahoe Sewer Authority (DCLTSA)
  - i. Depends on NDEP permitting and agreement with DCLTSA – may include secondary treatment, tertiary filtration, and nutrient removal.

16. How can I best stay informed?

Email your name to [recycledwater@stpud.us](mailto:recycledwater@stpud.us) to get on the project notification list or call 530-544-6474 x6202 to be added to the project notification list.

Bookmark the project webpage: <https://stpud.us/recycled-water-strategic-plan/>