

Water Supply Assessments for the City of Santa Cruz

Santa Cruz, CA



EKI has prepared two SB 610-compliant Water Supply Assessments (WSAs) for the City of Santa Cruz. Both projects were highly controversial and have received significant scrutiny and opposition by portions of the community.

In 2009, EKI prepared a WSA to support the City of Santa Cruz's Sphere of Influence (SOI) Amendment Project and aided the City in responding to comments related to water issues on the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Project included the expansion of the City's SOI to accommodate a 374-acre planned development within the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) campus. The planned development will provide housing and services for an additional 4,500 students by academic year 2020/2021.

The SOI Amendment Project was part of a comprehensive settlement agreement resulting from litigation of UCSC's Long Range Development Plan (LRDP). Pursuant to the settlement agreement, the City expanded its SOI to provide extraterritorial water and sewer service to portions of the University that will be developed under the LRDP.

The City of Santa Cruz serves water to approximately 96,000 people, over an approximately 30-square mile area. The City's water supply sources include groundwater, surface water diversions, and a surface water reservoir. The City's water supplies are very limited and significant curtailment of water use is required during drought periods. Plans to construct a \$116 million regional seawater desalination plant are currently underway to address the City's shortfall in water supplies during drought periods. The WSA evaluated the availability of the City's water supply sources to meet the demands of the University's LRDP in addition to the City's existing and planned water uses, during normal and dry years over a 20-year horizon.

In 2011, EKI prepared a WSA to support the update of the City's General Plan. While the necessity to prepare a WSA for a general plan update is subject to legal interpretation, the City of Santa Cruz chose to prepare one voluntarily to serve as a long-term planning tool and to support the General Plan process. The WSA evaluated water demands for the City's 26-square mile planning area based on the land use changes anticipated by the General Plan update. The WSA also projected water demands for the City's water service area, which extends beyond the planning area into portions of the City of Capitola and into unincorporated areas of the County of Santa Cruz, based on projected population changes. Water demands for the City's planning area and greater water service area were evaluated against the availability and anticipated reliability of the City's water supply sources.

Both WSAs were unanimously approved by the City Council.