



# Media Release

## **Court grants board's request to appoint receiver to troubled drinking water system in Santa Cruz County**

***First step made toward restoring reliable water service for residents***

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**SANTA CRUZ** – Following the Santa Cruz County Superior Court's approval of a receivership request by the State Water Resources Control Board, the firm Silver & Wright LLP has been appointed to assume possession and control of Big Basin Water Co. The privately owned drinking water system in the Santa Cruz mountains has been plagued by water outages, chronic supply shortfalls and substandard infrastructure.

Santa Cruz County Judge Timothy Volkmann signed the final order appointing Silver & Wright LLP as receiver on Oct. 6. The order applies only to the company's drinking water system, which has 540 connections serving about 1,200 people. The management and operation of the company's wastewater treatment plant are still the responsibility of its longtime owners, Thomas and Shirley Moore.

The State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water sought receivership after the Moores demonstrated they were unwilling or unable to pursue solutions for ongoing problems in the company's drinking water system. Since 2019, the division has issued 11 enforcement actions for a variety of violations, including failure to comply with cross connection control requirements, failure to sustain sufficient source capacity, and failure to make necessary improvements to water tanks and other infrastructure.

"We are very encouraged by the judge's order and the sense of hope it gives to Big Basin's customers," said Jonathan Weininger, a senior engineer with the division. "While years of neglect and mismanagement cannot be turned around overnight, having a receiver in place means the lines of communication are open and that the operation of Big Basin Water is no longer at a standstill. We now have a partner with whom we can make progress toward the long-term drinking water solutions this community deserves."

The company's drinking water customers have experienced repeated water outages over the past few years, with many currently under precautionary boiled water notices due to system-wide low system pressure brought about by critically low tank levels. Many customers travel to the San Lorenzo Valley Water District's fill station in Boulder Creek to obtain water for their homes.



While Silver & Wright LLP is to take possession and control of the drinking water system, the firm is an agent of the court and needs its approval to make key decisions, such as securing funding and upgrading equipment.

Earlier this year, the Moores agreed to sell the company to Central States Water Resources, a privately owned company in Missouri. The prospective buyer must work with the receiver and clear several regulatory hurdles before any sale can be finalized, including obtaining a permit from the division to ensure it is equipped to run a drinking water system. Regardless, the receivership can only be terminated by a court decision.

*The State Water Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper allocation and efficient use for present and future generations.*