

Strategic Plan

2025-2030



**NORTH MARIN
WATER DISTRICT**



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Message from the General Manager



Tony Williams,
General Manager

North Marin Water District is proud to share our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan. This plan is the product of months of listening, analysis, and collaboration - with our customers, our staff, our Board of Directors, and our regional partners. We heard what matters most: safe, reliable, affordable water service; clear communication and accountability; and steady, practical progress on the projects that strengthen the water infrastructure and ultimately our community. That spirit of partnership runs through this plan and our work every day.

To build this plan, we combined community input with the on-the-ground experience of our operators, construction crews, engineers, chemists, and customer service teams, and the policy guidance of our Board. We held discussions and workshops, reviewed other similar agencies in California, system data and risk assessments, and weighed trade-offs through the lens of service quality and ratepayer impact. The result is not a glossy pamphlet that sits on a conference table. It is a roadmap we will work from - one that sets direction, sequences projects, identifies funding pathways, and makes the District more resilient in an ever-changing environment.

At its core, the plan keeps us focused on the fundamentals. Our Water Supply – Stafford Dam and Lake, groundwater wells, and the Russian River through our long-standing relationship with Sonoma Water.

Our system - storage tanks, pump stations, pipelines, hydrants, and treatment facilities. Together these form the backbone that makes every other commitment possible. Investing in that backbone, operating it safely, and planning for tomorrow's needs are central to this strategy.

The Strategic Plan is organized around clear Goals, each supported by practical Actions. Each action in the plan has a target date, so progress is visible and trackable. Some actions are near-term that improve day-to-day administration and operations; others are multi-year initiatives or large capital projects that will prepare our system for natural hazards as well as the next generation. I will report on progress regularly, adjust as conditions change, and return to the Board and community with honest updates on what's working, what's ahead, and where we might need to pivot.

Thank you to everyone who contributed ideas, asked hard questions, and helped sharpen our priorities. On behalf of our Board and staff, I invite you to read the Goals and associated Actions and stay engaged as we put this plan to work.

Mission

Our mission is to meet the expectations of our customers in providing potable and recycled water and sewer services that are reliable, high-quality, environmentally responsible, and reasonably priced.

Vision

We strive to optimize the value of services we provide to our customers and continually seek new ways to enhance efficiency and promote worker and customer engagement and satisfaction.

Our Approach

This Strategic Plan was developed over 12 months through a structured process led by our consultant facilitator, Kiosk. The work combined research, interviews, surveys, meetings, and workshops to ensure the final plan reflects customer priorities, leadership knowledge, employee input, and Board direction.

Research

We began by aligning on scope and method, then gathered baseline information:

- Briefing and process definition
- Desk research: review of prior plans and the District’s organizational structure
- Peer organization research: how comparable districts structure teams
- Strategic plan best practices: ensuring our approach was thorough yet efficient

Interviews and Surveys

We engaged people who rely on and deliver our services:

- Customer Survey
- Employee Surveys
- Stakeholder interviews: 7 staff, 5 Board Directors, 5 Department Heads

What We Heard

From this input, ten key themes emerged:

1. Infrastructure Resilience
2. Water Supply & Regional Partnerships
3. Safety & Regulatory Compliance
4. Organizational Structure Review & Leadership Succession
5. Workforce Development & Retention
6. Financial Sustainability & Cost Management
7. Emergency Preparedness & Risk Mitigation
8. Public Engagement & Education
9. Technology & Operational Efficiency
10. Governance & Board Effectiveness

From Themes to Goals

Working with the Board and Department Heads, we organized these themes into six clear Strategic Goals that define where the District needs to focus over the next five years.

Building the Actions

To determine how to achieve the Goals, we conducted:

- A Board and Department Heads workshop
- Meetings with strategic partners and peer agencies
- Multiple Department Head working sessions
- Internal cross-functional team reviews to test feasibility, sequencing, and ownership

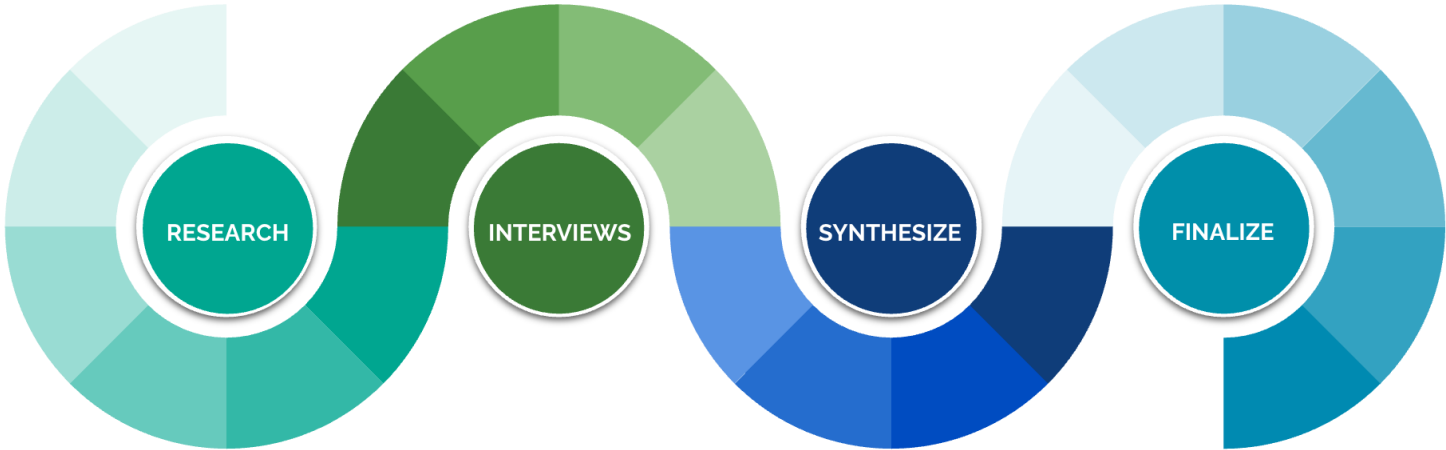
Synthesize and Refine

We consolidated all inputs into draft Goals and Actions, then:

- Summarized results and decision points
- Reviewed internally for alignment with budget, staffing, and risk
- Met with teams to refine language, timelines, dependencies, and lead responsibilities

What follows is a plan we built together and stand behind - one that carries the voices of our community and the expertise of our team. It reflects real input and is practical and measurable, with defined actions, accountable owners, and timeframes; we will use it to guide budgets and work programs, report progress, and adjust as needed. We’re proud of it - and we’re ready to get to work.

All target dates in this document reference North Marin Water District fiscal years.



GOAL 1

Strengthen Infrastructure Resilience

1.1 Replace aging infrastructure using a phased approach

Use Master Planning and condition assessments to update and implement a multi-year capital improvement plan (CIP) that prioritizes aging assets - including high-risk facilities to reduce dependence on emergency repairs.

Target start date: 2026 (ongoing annually)



1.2 Implement system redundancy as part of the overall CIP

1.2.1 Identify Water System Vulnerabilities

Identify vulnerabilities in the water distribution system e.g. single-source pipelines and pump stations.

Target completion date: 2026

1.2.2 Find Opportunities to Add System Redundancy

Identify redundancy opportunities such as looping and bypass solutions to prevent service disruptions to critical customers. Program attainable solutions in the multi-year CIP or identify opportunities within new development in accordance with District Regulation 13.

Target completion date: 2027

1.3 Leverage proven technology to establish a comprehensive asset management and preventative maintenance program

Expand the use of NEXGEN Asset Management software for all District work orders, existing GIS mapping, and new technologies to more effectively monitor system functionality, prioritize repairs, reduce lifecycle costs, and extend the life of critical assets.

Target completion date: 2028

1.4 Pursue diversified funding for capital projects

Identify and apply for eligible state and federal grants, pursue low-interest loans, and explore regional cost-sharing opportunities to help finance priority infrastructure upgrades or water supply projects, with the goal of keeping rates affordable.

Target start date: 2026 (ongoing process)

1.5 Strengthen seismic and rural resilience

Upgrade infrastructure in seismically-vulnerable zones to ensure continued service and structural stability during natural disasters. Where feasible, improve site access for remote facilities to support emergency response and maintenance.

Target start date: 2028 (ongoing implementation)

1.6 Collaborate with neighboring agencies to identify interconnection opportunities

Work jointly with regional partners to explore interconnections and system looping to enhance water supply reliability, operational flexibility, and emergency preparedness.

Target completion date: 2027



GOAL 2

Foster Organizational Excellence

2.1 Undertake a comprehensive organizational structure review to improve District effectiveness

The review will examine: (a) the District's org chart, roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines to strengthen capacity and review use of third parties, including for IT and OT (SCADA); (b) centralizing oversight of District-wide safety, security, training, emergency management, and regulatory compliance to improve accountability and reduce risk (c) the role and structure of the Water Quality Division to ensure strategic focus and capacity to meet growing regulatory demands (d) adjusting senior leadership and department-level reporting lines to improve clarity and collaboration (e) rebalancing management workloads by assessing span of control and better aligning staffing levels with functional needs.

Target completion date: 2026

2.2 Standardize safety training and emergency preparedness using new Emergency Response Plan (ERP) as a guide

Implement mandatory annual safety training, department-wide emergency drills, and a uniform onboarding safety curriculum for all employees to reinforce a culture of safety and preparedness within the District. Perform annual audits to ensure adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other safety equipment and supplies.

Target completion date: 2028

2.3 Establish a centralized compliance tracking and audit system

Create a digital system for monitoring regulatory deadlines, documentation, policy, and District Regulations updates. Consider using NEXGEN.

Target completion date: 2029

2.4 Improve internal communication and team cohesion

Hold regular all-staff meetings, consider launching an intranet, and identify cross-department initiatives to foster collaboration and morale.

Target completion date: 2028

2.5 Explore shared resources opportunities and alternative models

Collaborate with neighboring water agencies to explore shared staffing or regional apprenticeship models, especially for remote or hard-to-staff areas. Explore use of contract services for West Marin and Oceana Marin.

Target completion date: 2029



2.6 Strengthen succession planning, mentorship, and career development

Prepare staff and the District for the future by: (a) defining clear and transparent pathways for professional development, career growth, and promotion (b) establishing a structured mentorship program to pair experienced staff with emerging leaders (c) supporting cross-training and leadership development (d) developing a succession plan that invests in internal talent, including identifying key roles at risk of turnover and documenting institutional knowledge to ensure continuity.

Target completion date: 2027

2.7 Foster a positive and inclusive workplace to maintain high staff retention

Launch an employee engagement and retention program that ensures staff feel consistently supported, valued, and empowered. To include: (a) strategies to provide competitive compensation and promote work-life balance (b) ways to strengthen an inclusive and respectful workplace culture (c) establishing channels for regular employee feedback, with follow-up action on key concerns (d) formalizing recognition of employee contributions and service milestones (e) updating the performance evaluation process to enhance two-way communication and professional growth.

Target completion date: 2027





GOAL 3

Ensure a Resilient Water Supply

3.1 Strengthen regional partnerships and maintain strong representation

Continue building collaborative partnerships with neighboring districts and water agencies to align on shared goals, pursue joint funding, and address regional water challenges. Maintain influence and equitable representation in Sonoma Water's Water Advisory Committee (WAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to protect the District's interests in cost and supply negotiations.

Target completion date: 2028



3.2 Strengthen infrastructure resilience through assessment and contingency planning

3.2.1 Conduct a District-Wide Supply Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessment

Evaluate the District's water transmission systems to identify weak points, single-source dependencies, and areas most at risk from drought, seismic events, or failures. Use asset data and system modeling to guide capital investment priorities, long-term strategies for West Marin supply, and optimization of existing infrastructure to improve conveyance efficiency, reduce water loss, and maximize resources under both normal and emergency conditions.

Target completion date: 2027

3.2.2 Establish a Major Asset Contingency Program

Using the assessment findings, create a program to ensure rapid response to critical failures of supply transmission systems, including pre-purchased spare parts, rapid repair contracts, mobile treatment or pumping assets, and scenario-based emergency planning to maintain service continuity.

Target completion date: 2028

3.3 Maintain and strengthen regional emergency water-sharing agreements

Regularly review and update existing agreements with neighboring agencies (e.g. Marin Municipal Water District, Inverness PUD, Sonoma Water) to ensure they remain current, actionable, and effective in supporting mutual aid during droughts or supply disruptions.

Target completion date: 2030

3.4 Implement drought contingency and water redundancy strategies

Develop and update drought response plans using the current Water Shortage Contingency Plan (Novato) and Annual Water Supply and Demand Assessments, explore additional interconnections and bypasses, and improve conveyance efficiency.

Target completion date: 2029

GOAL 4

Enhance Customer Understanding and Engagement

4.1 Develop and launch a public education campaign

4.1.1 Develop the Campaign Plan

Design a branded, District-wide initiative using multiple communication channels to improve water literacy and build community understanding of the District's supply challenges, infrastructure needs, and long-term plans. The plan will define key messages, audiences, and channels so customers know where their water comes from, how it is treated and delivered, and why conservation and infrastructure investment are essential. It will outline strategies to raise awareness of supply risks, storage limitations, and the need for diversification, and set an outreach schedule aligned with seasonal water use patterns, drought conditions, and major project milestones.

Target completion date: 2026

4.1.2 Execute the Campaign

Implement the campaign across digital, print, local media, and social outlets, delivering engaging content supported by a library of brochures, explainer videos, infographics, and FAQs on topics such as rate structures, drought preparedness, and project funding. Use meetings, outreach, and storytelling to make complex issues accessible, relevant, and actionable for the community.

Target start date: 2027 (ongoing process)

4.2 Develop a multi-year community engagement plan

Identify key community events - such as farmers markets, school visits, and open houses - for outreach and relationship-building outside of crisis moments. Community events may include periodic open house events at Stafford Treatment Plant, Rush Creek Place (RCP), or key pump stations.

Target completion date: 2027

4.3 Build a rapid response strategy for misinformation

Develop a clear process for monitoring misinformation and potentially responding quickly with fact-based communications to maintain public trust. A multi-departmental team should be prepared to address misinformation on topics such as: finances, rates, projects, regulations, the dam, the lake, water quality, development, water supply, etc.

Target completion date: 2026



4.4 Provide regular financial planning and rate forecast updates

Issue accessible, jargon-free summaries of financial plans, budgets and upcoming projects to prepare the public for necessary rate changes and infrastructure investments.

Target start date: 2028 (annual process)

4.5 Expand multi-lingual and multi-channel communications

Ensure materials are translated into Spanish and other key languages (as needed), and use diverse communication methods - such as social media, mailers, radio, and events - to reach all demographics.

Target completion date: 2028

GOAL 5

Optimize Operational Performance Readiness

5.1 Modernize District Information Technology (IT) systems and digitize operations

5.1.1 Develop the IT Modernization Plan

Evaluate the District's existing IT infrastructure and create a long-term, District-wide modernization plan that supports remote access, system integration, and operational efficiency. The plan will set priorities for replacing legacy systems and manual processes with secure, cloud-based or subscription-based platforms, consolidating data across departments to improve analytics and coordination, and adopting proven and innovative technologies to enhance performance. It will also establish strategies for equipping field staff with mobile tools and digital workflows, ensuring structured role-specific training, and reducing vendor dependency through process documentation and building internal IT capacity.

Target completion date: 2027

5.1.2 Implement the IT Modernization Plan

Phase upgrades to software, hardware, and networks according to operational priorities, deploying new systems in a way that minimizes disruption and maximizes adoption. Execute the plan's technology replacements, integrations, and mobile tool rollouts while maintaining robust onboarding and training programs, ensuring all staff can use the new systems effectively and securely.

Target start date: 2030 (multi-year implementation)



5.2 Strengthen cybersecurity through a comprehensive audit and District-wide program

Engage a third-party firm to assess vulnerabilities across all IT systems, including SCADA, remote monitoring, and proprietary software. Use findings to establish a formal cybersecurity program with protocols for intrusion detection, data backup, ransomware response, and ongoing staff training—ensuring operational resilience and data security.

Target start date: 2027 (annual process)

5.3 Review and consider modernizing the SCADA* system and telemetry infrastructure

Replace or modernize aging SCADA components and expand telemetry capabilities to enable real-time monitoring, faster emergency response, and better operational visibility.

Target completion date: 2028

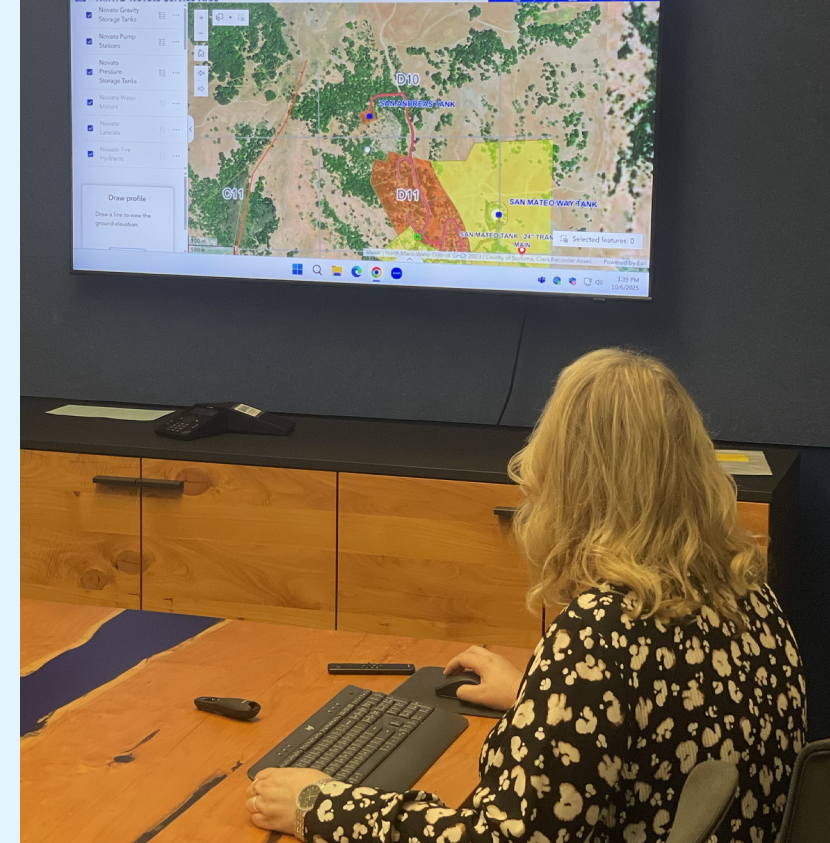
5.4 Enhance and adapt GIS[†] and GPS tools to better support District operations

Build on the District's existing ArcGIS platform by customizing tools and workflows to improve infrastructure mapping, field data collection, asset tracking, and long-term planning accuracy.

Target completion date: 2028

***SCADA stands for Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition:** It's the system used to monitor and control equipment from a central interface, helping operators maintain pressure, manage storage levels, detect leaks/failures, and improve response times and reliability.

†GIS stands for Geographic Information System: It's software for capturing, storing, analyzing, and visualizing location-based data, such as maps of pipes, valves, hydrants, parcels, and service lines.



5.5 Leverage existing smart meter data and implement predictive analytics

Use data from smart water meters to improve demand forecasting, and apply predictive models that help identify system vulnerabilities and optimize maintenance planning.

Target completion date: 2030

5.6 Modernize customer service and billing systems

Upgrade billing software and customer engagement platforms to reduce manual errors, improve responsiveness, and streamline service interactions.

Target completion date: 2029

GOAL 6

Maintain Effective and Transparent Governance

6.1 Establish a comprehensive Board onboarding, training, and development program

Create a formal orientation and continuing education program to ensure all Board members understand their governance role, responsibilities, and strategic priorities. The program will provide training on Board functions, financial oversight, strategic planning, and public communication, and will identify ways to participate in relevant conferences, workshops, and regional governance forums. It will include regular reviews and updates to the Board Manual, to ensure Directors have a resource that reflects current policies, responsibilities, and best practices.

Target completion date: 2027

6.2 Support the Board's ability to focus on strategic issues

Review and update the Board Manual to reinforce the Board's role in setting policy and providing oversight. Strengthen the use of tools such as the consent calendar to streamline routine approvals and ensure that Board meetings allow sufficient time for discussion of long-term priorities and strategic matters.

Target completion date: 2026



6.3 Increase Board involvement in policy advocacy and funding efforts

Encourage Board participation in regional, state, and federal forums to advocate for funding, legislation, and regional water policy priorities.

Target completion date: 2029

6.4 Strengthen Board-staff communication protocols

Create a standardized process for sharing information between staff and the Board—such as Ad-hoc Committees, pre-meeting briefings, monthly reports/dashboards, and follow-up Board summaries.

Target completion date: 2028

6.5 Establish a Board mentorship program

Pair experienced Board members with new directors to support institutional continuity and faster onboarding of governance best practices.

Target completion date: 2029

Summary

The 2025–2030 North Marin Water District Strategic Plan is a practical roadmap for the next five years. It translates community input, staff expertise, and Board direction into clear Goals supported by specific, measurable Actions. Each action includes an expected timeline to completion. Progress will be tracked and reported annually at Board meetings, with adjustments made as conditions change.

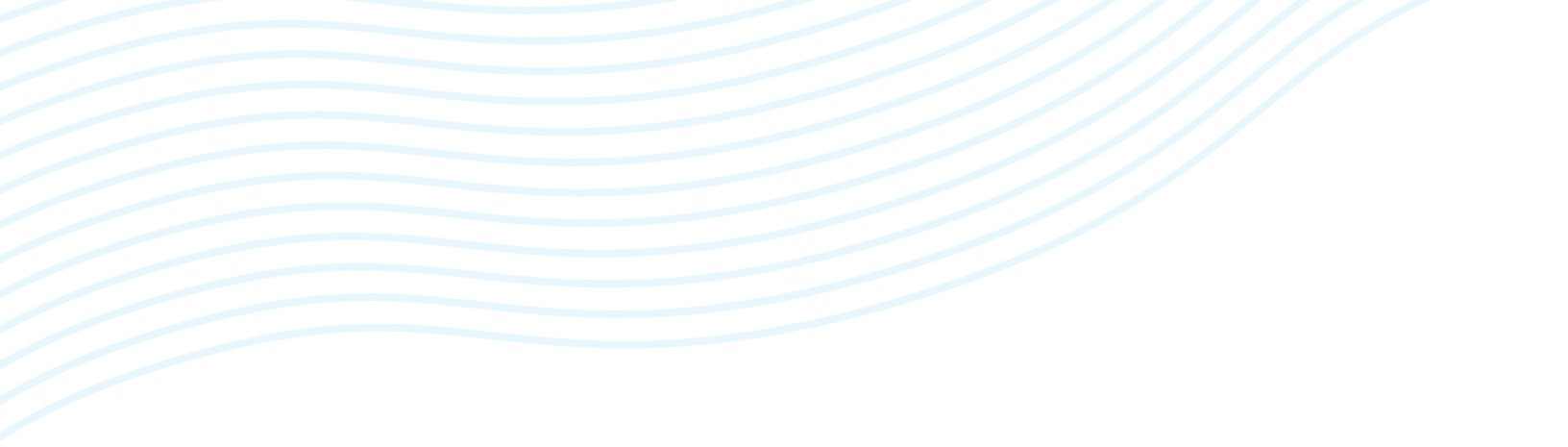
This plan will guide how we prioritize work and invest resources. It will inform our master planning efforts, shape Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) priorities, align annual budgets with strategic needs, and focus departmental work programs on the actions that deliver the most value to customers. By connecting strategy to implementation - we will strengthen reliability, affordability, and service quality across the District.

Thank you to the customers, employees, Board Directors, partner agencies, consultants, and community stakeholders who contributed their time and ideas. Your involvement sharpened the priorities reflected here.

We welcome feedback and questions as we put this plan into action.

For more information, contact the District at 999 Rush Creek Place, Novato or info@nmwd.com





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