

Impartial Analysis of Measure Q

Measure Q was placed on the ballot by an initiative petition called the “Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Initiative,” which collected the required number of voter signatures and was certified by the County Clerk in May 2024.

Measure Q seeks to add Chapter 4.65 to the Santa Cruz County Code which would impose a Special Parcel Tax in the amount of eighty-seven dollars (\$87) on each parcel located within the County, with identified exceptions. If passed by a majority of voters, it is estimated that the measure would raise approximately \$7.3 million annually for specific purposes as described below. The tax would begin in fiscal year 2025-2026 and continue until ended by voters.

The proposed measure would fund projects focusing on water conservation, water quality, flood protection and restoration, protection of public access to beaches, wildlife protection, pollution reduction, development of shaded fuel breaks and reduction of hazardous fuels, forest management, wetlands restoration, trail development, park improvements, recreation programs, climate risk-reduction, and other projects as identified. Additionally, the proposed code chapter establishes a basis for prioritizing among eligible projects and recognizes areas of acute need.

The proposed measure places responsibility on the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors to annually distribute the funds collected by the special parcel tax for eligible projects, as follows:

- Forty percent of the available funds will be distributed for eligible projects through a grant program administered by the County of Santa Cruz;
- Twenty percent of the available funds will be distributed to incorporated cities within the County for eligible projects;
- Twenty percent of the available funds will be distributed in the unincorporated parts of the County for eligible projects; and
- Twenty percent of the available funds will be distributed to the Resource Conservation District and a local land stewardship implementation partner for completion of eligible projects on private lands that result in a public benefit.

Voters are referred to the Voter Information Guide for the full text and details of Proposed Chapter 4.65.

In accordance with California law, this measure contains certain accountability measures that must be followed for funds collected from a special tax. This includes: 1) using the funds only for specific identified purposes, 2) creating a separate account, or accounts, where the funds will be deposited and kept, and 3) submitting an annual report that contains the amount of funds collected and expended, and the status of any projects required or authorized to be funded by the measure.

The measure also includes creating a nine-member Citizens Oversight Advisory Board to conduct hearings and receive public input on allocations related to expenditures, receive annual reports from local agencies on projects funded, and approve a five-year vision plan to help identify and prioritize fund expenditures.

A special tax placed on the ballot by a citizen initiative measure only requires a majority (50% +1) by voters for approval.

A “yes” vote on Measure Q is a vote to add Chapter 4.65 to the County Code and allow a special parcel tax of \$87 to be collected annually until ended by voters for specific eligible projects.

A “no” vote on Measure Q is a vote against adding Chapter 4.65 and the collection of a special parcel tax.

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