

THE HERON

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District

Winter 2025

Nicholas Lavrov Elected to District Board of Directors



The Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District welcomes Nicholas Lavrov, who was elected to the Board of Directors

in November and sworn in on December 19. As a Board member, Mr. Lavrov helps represent the District's community and ratepayers in the critical areas of water management, environmental protection, and sustainable operations. He will serve the remaining two years of this seat's four-year term (the partial term is due to the resignation of former Director Ronald Ford earlier this year). Incumbents Craig Murray and Gary Robards ran unopposed in this election and will continue to serve as directors for a new four-year term.

Mr. Lavrov has worked for over 25 years in the public sector. Among other roles, his experience includes seven years as senior park ranger involved in overseeing the permit management program for Golden Gate National Recreation Area lands in Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties. He's also worked with the San Francisco Water Department on water inspection and water conservation programs, and managed 270,000 acres of U.S. parklands and resources for the Bureau of Land

Continued on page 4...

Do You Know What Items Should NOT Go Down YOUR Drain?

NO fats, oil, grease, wipes, or prescription drugs!

Your help is needed to avoid creating a sewer overflow, and to protect our environment! Did you know that some typical household substances should not go down the drain, because they can cause a sewer overflow or other problems? Here's an overview of how you can help with pollution prevention, and do your part to keep such materials from getting into the system in the first place.

Prevent FOG

Many of us may enjoy a nice, foggy Sunday morning — but there's a different kind of FOG that is not so enjoyable for drains and sewers. **FOG** stands for "Fats, Oil, and Grease" and those are all things that should **not** be put down the drain. They can pollute our waterways and easily build up in drains and the sewer lines, causing restrictions and overflows in your home or further down the line. And, they cause problems at the treatment plant. FOG includes substances like cooking oil, lard,

butter/margarine, shortening, bacon grease, some sauces and salad dressings, cheese, and meat fat trimmings.



Here are some tips for preventing FOG from entering the sewer system:

- Never pour fats, oil, or grease down the drain.
- Use a paper towel to wipe cooled oil and grease from cooking pans before washing — put the paper towel in your green organics cart.

Continued on page 3...



Easy Sign-Up for District Information

Get the District information you want via email! Just click on the QR code at left to subscribe to timely emails including news and updates, links to our newsletters, and agendas for our Board of Directors' meetings. And don't worry — we'll never sell or give your email to any third party.

Department Spotlight: Engineering

The District's Engineering Department (Team) is pivotal in ensuring environmental compliance, upgrading critical infrastructure, and advancing sustainability initiatives. The Team is responsible for managing the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), overseeing essential projects that modernize facilities and enhance wastewater management, safeguarding the environment, and benefitting the community.



District's Wastewater Treatment Plant — upgrade completed June 2023.

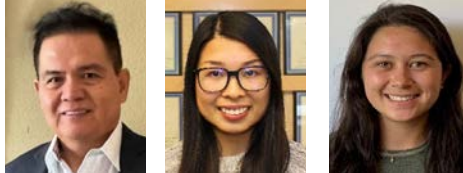
A recent highlight for the department was the completion of a ~\$70 million **upgrade to LGVSD's wastewater treatment plant**. This major improvement increases treatment efficiency and capacity and supports regulatory compliance, addressing the high standards required for safe and effective wastewater processing.

The Team is also preparing for upgrades to the **wastewater collection system**, to rehabilitate sewer mains and modernize the largest pump station in the District — the Duckett Pump Station. Built in the 1960s, this station will soon undergo upgrades to its electrical systems and conveyance infrastructure, including critical pipelines that run under a freeway and a creek.

A unique aspect of LGVSD's operation is its **reclamation area**, where treated water is stored during certain times of the year when discharge to the Bay is restricted by their regulatory permit.

The Team plays a vital role in developing projects for proper operation and maintenance of the infrastructure supporting these holding ponds, ensuring they function properly throughout the year.

The Engineering Department Team



Mike Cortez,
District
Engineer

Irene Huang,
Associate
Engineer

Patty Quinn,
Civil
Engineering
Technician

The department includes the District Engineer, an Associate Engineer, and a Civil Engineering Technician.

The Team manages an impressive workload of 47 CIP projects totaling ~\$18 million for fiscal year 2024-2025.

Of these, 44 are currently active, with a mix of large-scale upgrades and smaller initiatives. Additionally, the department is reviewing more than 40 private land development and building renovations, ensuring the projects integrate seamlessly into the LGVSD sewer system.

The department Team issues requests for proposals, manages consultant bids and work, and oversees project construction, ensuring each project meets LGVSD's sustainability standards and regulatory requirements. The Team continuously strengthens LGVSD's infrastructure to support long-term community needs and environmental stewardship, and thoughtfully incorporates sustainable design elements into every project. Careful planning and dedication make the Team a driving force in the District's commitment to reliable, compliant, and sustainable wastewater management.

District's Role in COVID-19 Detection

Wastewater-based epidemiology

When the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread, researchers drew on their existing knowledge of detecting viruses and pathogens in wastewater to start looking for and identifying the presence of the virus. That capability opened a new frontier in tracking the virus as it spread through human populations, by identifying its presence in the sewage systems. This *wastewater-based epidemiology* allowed for early detection of the disease, giving health authorities vital information to identify "hot spots" and work to reduce localized outbreaks.

In early 2020, the District was approached by researchers from UC Berkeley, Stanford, and other institutions to support COVID-19 detection efforts in wastewater. The District quickly joined the effort, providing samples and contributing to the nationwide push to curb the pandemic. This work, completed at no additional cost to ratepayers, underscored LGVSD's commitment to leveraging wastewater science for the public good—from local residents to the wider population.



State Recognition of District's Efforts

In the fall of 2021, LGVSD's contributions were formally recognized by the California State Water Resources Control Board in a resolution honoring wastewater treatment utilities for efforts in helping to better track the virus. This recognition highlighted the District and other agencies as early trendsetters in

Continued on page 4...

- You can also pour cooled grease from pans into compostable containers, and place them in your green organics cart.



No Wipes in the Toilet

Please remember that disposable wipes of any kind, even those advertised as "flushable," should never be flushed down the drain. These wipes, or anything other than toilet paper (including personal wipes, baby wipes, paper towels, feminine hygiene products, and other paper products — and, kitty litter!) can cause obstructions in the sewer collection system — and some of them must be physically removed at the wastewater treatment plant. Flushing wipes may also damage the plumbing system in your own home, potentially resulting in significant repairs and homeowner costs.

When it comes to your toilets, just keep in mind that the only things to be flushed are the **Three Ps** — **P**ee, **P**oop, and (toilet) **P**aper!

Don't Put Meds Down the Drain

Flushing your unused prescription pills down the toilet can cause water quality issues because wastewater treatment plants are typically not equipped to remove pharmaceuticals from the wastewater. Those medications could affect the environment and endanger public health. Instead, you can safely dispose of your unused pharmaceuticals by dropping them off at an authorized site (see list at right).

Check GetSmartAboutDrugs.gov for drop-off locations during each fall's annual National Prescription Drug Take Back Day.

Everyone can help prevent FOG, wipes/paper products, and prescription drugs from entering our drains and sewers, by taking these easy steps. This helps to keep the system running smooth and prevent environmental impacts and overflows — at home, at the treatment plant, and in the collection system. Thank you for doing your part!



Pharmaceutical Drop-Off Locations*

Be sure to call your preferred location first to confirm they continue to accept drug drop-off.

Your local CVS or Rite Aid Store

San Rafael Police Department

1400 Fifth Ave.
San Rafael
(415) 485-3000

Kaiser San Rafael (Los Gamos) Pharmacy

1650 Los Gamos Drive,
Floor 2, Room 2600
San Rafael
(415) 444-2000

Marin County Sheriff's Office

1600 Los Gamos Drive,
Suite 205
San Rafael
(415) 473-6043

Kaiser San Rafael

99 Montecillo Road
San Rafael
(415) 444-2980

County of Marin Probation Department

3501 Civic Center Drive,
Room 266
San Rafael
(415) 473-6310

Kaiser San Rafael Downtown

1033 3rd Street, First Floor
San Rafael
(415) 482-6900

For the most updated list, visit med-project.org/locations/marin-county.

*Location sources:

- County of Marin Department of Health and Human Services
- Marin County Environmental Health Services
- Med-Project, Medication Education & Disposal



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Board of Directors

Megan Clark
Nicholas Lavrov
Craig K. Murray
Gary Robards
Crystal J. Yezman


Board Meetings are

held at 4:00 PM on
the first and third
Thursday of each month
at the District offices.

District Administration: Curtis Paxton, General Manager

The District received the following awards and certificates:

- Recycled Water Agency of the Year 2023 (Small Category) from the California WaterReuse Association
- District Transparency Certificate of Excellence by the Special District Leadership Foundation for 2022-2025 in recognition of its outstanding efforts to promote transparency and good governance.
- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 2023 from Government Finance Officers Association.

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"Nicholas Lavrov" continued from page 1

Management in the Bay Area/northern California. Currently, he serves as Environmental Protection Specialist at the Federal Emergency Management Agency in Oakland, helping the states of California, Nevada, Arizona, Hawaii, and territories located in the U.S. Pacific Islands to rebuild after disasters.

Mr. Lavrov holds a bachelor's degree in economics from UC Berkeley, and is working on a master's degree in Natural Resource Management from the University of Idaho. He is a State-certified Water Distribution Operator-Grade 2, and has been trained in several FEMA programs including the National Incident Management System, Emergency Preparedness, Incident Command, and Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience.

Mr. Lavrov notes his long-time commitment to the community served by the District, saying, *"I'm excited to join the LGVSD Board of Directors and bring my wide experience in water and wastewater, clean power, and protecting the environment to*

"Covid -19" continued from page 2

implementing wastewater-based epidemiology well before formal State and Federal programs were developed. The Water Board expressed "profound appreciation" for LGVSD's voluntary efforts and investments, underscoring the importance of wastewater monitoring for informing public health responses and safeguarding California's communities.

Today, with the "new normal" of COVID and its variants, the District continues to work with its state and local partners to gather information about the virus's presence in wastewater. Through this work we are making important contributions to the knowledge base toward a better understanding of COVID and its variants.

the service of the District." He looks forward to working with the other Board members and staff to address key initiatives including:

- upgrading aging infrastructure
- increasing use of recycled water
- expanding the low-income

District Welcomes New Team Members

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District is excited to welcome Angela Beran as the new Grant Management and Procurement Specialist, a position added in 2024 to meet the growing needs of the District. We are also pleased to announce the hiring of Brendan Pankow as Electrical Instrumentation Technician, and Russell Gondoli as Skilled Maintenance Worker, filling existing positions that recently became vacant. Welcome to the team!



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program for the disadvantaged in the community

Please join us in welcoming Director Lavrov in his new role, helping guide our District toward a sustainable future.