



LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

SPECIAL DISTRICTS GOVERNANCE POLICY

Adopted on December 7, 1994 (Resolution No. 801-D)
Last Revision on October 7, 2020 (Resolution No. 2020-28)

1. OVERVIEW

The Special Districts Governance Policy was first introduced in December 1981. The intent was to set rules and regulations that will govern the functions and services of independent special districts. The purpose was to clarify the legal requirements under Government Code Section 56450 et seq. These particular sections were eventually repealed and replaced with the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 ("Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act" or "CKH Act"). The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act establishes procedures for local government changes or organization, including city incorporations, annexations to a city or special district, and city and special district consolidations.

2. GOVERNANCE

There are three primary sources of authority for forming and reorganizing special districts. The first is the special district's enabling act. Most types of districts have a series of statutes specific to that type of special district. These statutes often contain the procedures for creating that type of special district. The second is the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act, which governs the establishment and reorganizations of local governments. Finally, there is the District Organization Law, which provides standardized special district organization and governance procedures for certain types of special districts¹.

For purposes of this policy, the following sections will focus on the special districts under LAFCO's purview in accordance with Government Code Section 56036:

- a) "District" or "special district" are synonymous and mean an agency of the state, formed pursuant to general law or special act, for the local performance of governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries and in areas outside district boundaries when authorized by the commission pursuant to Government Code Section 56133.
- b) "District" or "special district" includes a county service area, but excludes all of the following: (1) The state, (2) A county, (3) A city, (4) A school district or a community college district, (5) An assessment district or special assessment district, (6) An improvement district, (7) A community facilities district formed pursuant to the Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982 (California Government Code section 53311 et seq.), (8) A permanent road division (formed pursuant to California Government Code 1160), (9) An air pollution control district or an air quality maintenance district, and (10) A zone of any special district.

¹ California Special Districts Association – Laws Governing Special Districts (December 23, 2015)

3. PRINCIPAL ACTS

Principal Acts are statutes established for an entire category of special districts. The Commission creates and governs independent special districts under the authority of these acts. Each special district type has its own principal act. Exhibit A is a list of independent special district types, the location of the associated principal act, and other relevant information about the district types.

4. SPECIAL ACTS

Special Acts are statutes that address the specific needs of a community and establish a specific special district to address those needs. These districts (rather than district types) are uniquely created by the Legislature. Below is a list of special acts affecting Santa Cruz County:

Type	Code Section
Flood Control	
Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation District Act (1955; Chapter 1489)	Water Code (77-1)
Transit	
Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District Act of 1967	Public Utilities Code (§98000 et seq.)
Water Agency or Authority	
County Water Authority Act (1943; Chapter 545)	Water Code (45-1)
Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency Act (1984)	Water Code (124-1)



Special District Principal Acts

Special District Type & Principal Act	Powers & Functions	Formation	Election Process	Number of Board Members
Airport Districts Public Utilities Code (§22001 et seq.)	Assist in the development of airports, spaceports, and air navigation facilities	Any territories of one or more counties and one or more cities, all or any part of any city and any part of the unincorporated territory of any county; the boundaries of a district may be altered and outlying contiguous territory in the same or an adjoining county annexed to the district.	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	5 Directors
California Water Districts Water Code (§34000 et seq.)	Maintain the necessary works for the production, storage, and distribution of water for irrigation, domestic, industrial, and municipal purposes, and any drainage or reclamation works	Any area of land which is capable of using water beneficially for irrigation, domestic, industrial or municipal purposes and which can be serviced from common sources of supply and by the same system of works; area need not be contiguous	Elected by landowner voters to 4 year terms	At least 5 Directors (may be increased to 7, 9, or 11)
California Water Storage Districts Water Code (§39000 et seq.)	Maintain the necessary works for the storage and distribution of water and drainage or reclamation works	Any land irrigated or capable of irrigation from a common source; under specific conditions the district need not be contiguous	Elected by landowner voters to 4 year terms	At least 5 Directors
Citrus Pest Districts Food & Agri. Code (§8401 et seq.)	Control and eradicate citrus pests	Any county devoted exclusively to the growing of citrus fruits	Appointed by the Board of Supervisors to fixed 4 year terms	5 Directors
Community Services Districts Government Code (§61000 et seq.)	Provide up to 32 different services such as, water, garbage collection, wastewater management, security, fire protection, public recreation, street lighting, mosquito abatement services, etc.	Any county or counties of an unincorporated territory or incorporated territory of a contiguous or noncontiguous area	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	5 Directors
Cotton Pest Abatement Districts Food & Agri. Code (§6051 et seq.)	Control and prevent introduction of pests, and oversee cotton plants in areas that are at risk of pests	Any land in more than one of the counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura with the consent of the Board of Supervisors of the counties affected	Appointed by the Board of Supervisors to fixed 4 year terms	5 Directors

Special District Type & Principal Act	Powers & Functions	Formation	Election Process	Number of Board Members
County Sanitation Districts Health & Safety Code (§4700 et seq.)	Maintain and operate sewage systems and sewage disposal or treatment plants	Any unincorporated or incorporated territory or both; the incorporated territory included in the district may include the whole or part of one or more cities with the permission of that city	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms or may choose to have a mixed board	3 Directors
County Water Districts Water Code (§30000 et seq.)	Develop regulations for the distribution and consumption of water; sell water; collect and dispose sewage, garbage, waste, trash and storm water; store water for future needs; may generate hydroelectric power; and provide fire protection under specified conditions	Any county or two or more contiguous counties or of a portion of such county or counties, whether the portion includes unincorporated territory or not	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	At least 5 Directors (may be increased to 7, 9, or 11)
Fire Protection Districts Health & Safety Code (§13800 et seq.)	Provide fire protection and other emergency services	Any territory, whether incorporated or unincorporated, whether contiguous or noncontiguous, may be included	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms or appointed by the Board of Supervisors (and City Council where applicable) to fixed 4 year terms	May be 3, 5, 7, 9, or 11 Directors (not to exceed 11)
Harbor Districts Harbors & Navigation Code (§6000 et seq.)	Manage any bay, harbor, inlet, river, channel, etc. in which tides are affected by the Pacific Ocean	Any portion or whole part of a county, city, or cities, the exterior boundary of which includes a harbor	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	5 Commissioners
Health Care / Hospital Districts Health & Safety Code (§32000 et seq.)	Establish, maintain, and operate, or provide assistance in the operation of, one or more health facilities or health services, including, but not limited to: outpatient programs, services, and facilities; retirement programs, services, and facilities; chemical dependency programs, services, and facilities	Any incorporated or unincorporated territory, or both, or territory in any one or more counties; the territory comprising this district need not be contiguous but the territory of a municipal corporation shall not be divided	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	5 Directors

Special District Type & Principal Act	Powers & Functions	Formation	Election Process	Number of Board Members
Irrigation Districts Water Code (§20500 et seq.)	Sell and lease water; operate sewage collection and disposal system; deliver water for fire protection; dispose and salvage sewage water; protect against damage from flood or overflow; provide drainage made necessary by the irrigation provided; maintain recreational facilities in connection with any dams, reservoirs, etc.; and operate and sell electrical power	Any land capable of irrigation; includes land used for residential or business purposes susceptible of receiving water for domestic or agriculture purposes; need not be contiguous	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	3 or 5 Directors
Levee Districts Water Code (§70000 et seq.)	Protect the district's land from overflow by constructing and maintaining the necessary infrastructure	Any county or counties or any portion thereof of an unincorporated territory or incorporated territory in need of protection of the lands of the district from overflow and for the purpose of conserving or adding water to the sloughs and drains	Elected by landowner voters to 4 year terms	3 Directors
Library Districts Education Code (§19400 et seq.)	Equip and maintain a public library in order to exhibit knowledge in a variety of areas	Any incorporated or unincorporated territory, or both, in any one or more counties, so long as the territory of the district consists of contiguous parcels and the territory of no city is divided	Appointed by the Board of Supervisors to fixed 4 year terms	3 or 5 Trustees
Memorial Districts Military & Veterans Code (§1170 et seq.)	Operate and maintain memorial halls, meeting places, etc. for veterans	Any incorporated territory of the county together with any contiguous unincorporated territory thereof; or may be formed entirely of contiguous incorporated territory; or entirely of contiguous unincorporated territory	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	5 Directors
Mosquito Abatement & Vector Control Districts Health & Safety Code (§2000 et seq.)	Conduct effective programs for the surveillance, prevention, abatement and control of mosquitos and other vectors	Any territory, whether incorporated or unincorporated, whether contiguous or noncontiguous and districts may not overlap	Appointed by the Board of Supervisors or the City Council to fixed 2-4 year terms	5 Trustees

Special District Type & Principal Act	Powers & Functions	Formation	Election Process	Number of Board Members
Municipal Utility Districts Public Utilities Code (§11501 et seq.)	Manage and supply light, water, power, heat, transportation, telephone service, or other means of communication, or means for the collection, treatment, or disposition of garbage, sewage or refuse matter	Any public agency together with unincorporated territory, or two or more public agencies, with or without unincorporated territory; public agencies and unincorporated territory included within a district may be in the same or separate counties and need not be contiguous; no public agency shall be divided in the formation of a district	Elected by resident voters to 2-4 year terms	5 Directors
Municipal Water Districts Water Code (§71000 et seq.)	Develop and sell water; promote water use efficiency; operate public recreational facilities; provide fire protection; collect and dispose trash, garbage, sewage, storm water and waste; and generate, sell and deliver hydroelectric power	Any county or counties, or of any portions thereof, whether such portions include unincorporated territory only or incorporated territory of any city or cities; cities and unincorporated territory does not need to be contiguous	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	5 Directors
Police Protection Districts Health & Safety Code (§20000 et seq.)	Provide police service to a community	May be formed in unincorporated towns	Elected by resident voters to 2-4 year terms	3 Commissioners
Port Districts Harbors & Navigation Code (§6200 et seq.)	Maintain and secure the ports	Shall include one municipal corporation and any contiguous unincorporated territory in any one county, but a municipal corporation shall not be divided	Appointed by the Board of Supervisors and City Council to fixed 4 year terms, and approved by resident voters	5 Commissioners
Public Cemetery Districts Health & Safety Code (§9000 et seq.)	Maintain public cemeteries in communities as necessary	Any territory, whether incorporated or unincorporated, whether contiguous or noncontiguous; districts may not overlap	Appointed by the Board of Supervisors to fixed 4 year terms	3 or 5 Trustees

Special District Type & Principal Act	Powers & Functions	Formation	Election Process	Number of Board Members
Public Utility Districts Public Utilities Code (§15501 et seq.)	Maintain the infrastructure to provide electricity, natural gas, water, power, heat, transportation, telephone service, or other means of communication, or the disposition of garbage, sewage, or refuse matter	May be incorporated and managed in unincorporated territory	Elected by resident voters to 2-4 Year terms	At least 3 Directors
Reclamation Districts Water Code (§50000 et seq.)	Reclaim and maintain land that is at risk of flooding for a variety of purposes	Any land within any city in which land is subject to overflow or incursions from the tide or inland waters of the state	Elected by landowner voters to 4 year terms	3, 5 or 7 Trustees
Recreation & Park Districts Public Resource Code (§5780 et seq.)	Organize and promote programs of community recreation, parks and open space, parking, transportation and other related services that improve the community's quality of life	Any territory, whether incorporated or unincorporated, whether contiguous or noncontiguous	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms or appointed by the Board of Supervisors to fixed 4 year terms	5 Directors
Resource Conservation Districts Public Resource Code (§9151 et seq.)	Manage a diversity of resource conservation projects, including soil and water conservation projects, wildlife habitat enhancement and restoration, control of exotic plant species, watershed restoration, conservation planning, education, and many others	Any land shall be those generally of value for agricultural purposes, but other lands may be included in a district if necessary to conserve resources	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	5, 7, or 9 Directors
Sanitary Districts Health & Safety Code (§6400 et seq.)	Maintain and operate garbage dumpsites, garbage collection and disposal systems, sewers, storm water drains and storm water collection, recycling and distribution systems	Any county, or in two or more counties within the same natural watershed area	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	5 Directors

Special District Type & Principal Act	Powers & Functions	Formation	Election Process	Number of Board Members
Transit Districts Public Utilities Code (§24501 et seq.)	Construct and operate rail lines, bus lines, stations, platforms, terminals and any other facilities necessary or convenient for transit service	Any city together with unincorporated territory, or two or more cities, with or without unincorporated territory may organize and incorporate as a transit district; cities and unincorporated territory included within a district may be in the same or separate counties and need not be contiguous; no city shall be divided in the formation of a district	Elected by resident voters to 2-4 year terms	7 Directors
Water Conservation Districts Water Code (§74000 et seq.)	Maintain, survey, and research water supplies	Unincorporated territory or partly within unincorporated and partly within incorporated territory, and may be within one or more counties that need water conservation services; territory does not need to be contiguous	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	3, 5 or 7 Directors
Water Replenishment Districts Water Code (§60000 et seq.)	Replenish the water and protect and preserve the groundwater supplies	Any land entirely within unincorporated territory, or partly within unincorporated territory and partly within incorporated territory, and within one or more counties in this state	Elected by resident voters to 4 year terms	5 Directors