

**From:** Keith Saarloos <[keith@saarloosandsons.com](mailto:keith@saarloosandsons.com)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 31, 2026 8:01:39 AM

**To:** [gm.locsd@gmail.com](mailto:gm.locsd@gmail.com) <[gm.locsd@gmail.com](mailto:gm.locsd@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** Demand for Proof, Cost Accountability, and a Real Comparison of Alternatives Before Advancing the Sewer Project

## To the Board of the Los Olivos Community Services District

Dear Board Members,

I am writing again because the stakes are too high for soft language, vague assumptions, or a process that asks this town to accept a generational financial burden without first proving the necessity of it.

The District is moving a centralized sewer project forward on the back of shallow monitoring data, escalating cost estimates, and a narrative of inevitability. What has not been shown—clearly, publicly, and with hard evidence—is that the water people in Los Olivos actually drink is impaired, that the law requires this project, or that a lower-cost decentralized path has been honestly exhausted.

That is not a small omission. That is the entire case.

The District's own March 2026 update makes clear that this project is still in development—advancing preliminary engineering, identifying a preferred alternative, and targeting a property-owner vote in 2027, while requiring additional funding simply to complete design. This is not a mandated solution. It is a discretionary project still being assembled—at extraordinary cost.

And those costs are not theoretical.

The Wallace Group analysis places total District capital costs between approximately \$37 million and \$50 million, with long-term lifecycle costs of similar magnitude. For property owners, the estimated 30-year cost is roughly \$87,000 to \$95,000 for a residence and over \$400,000 for a commercial property.

For a business, that is not a projection. That is a decision point—whether it survives, whether it invests, whether it stays in Los Olivos.

For a Resident - This is a MAKE OR BREAK - Do We Sell Our Home and MOVE and destroy COMMUNITY!!!!

Now compare that to what the District has actually shown as the basis for urgency.

The District's most recent groundwater monitoring data (December 2025) shows:

MW-1: 2.3 mg/L  
MW-2: 10 mg/L  
MW-3: 6.0 mg/L  
MW-4: 11.8 mg/L  
MW-5: 4.8 mg/L

Four of the five wells are at or below, or only at, the State Maximum Contaminant Level of 10 mg/L. Only one well exceeds that threshold.

This is not a system-wide failure. It is a limited condition.

At the same time, groundwater depths range from approximately 4.6 feet to 26.26 feet below ground surface. These are shallow monitoring wells.

That distinction matters.

Potable wells in Los Olivos are not shallow. They are typically drilled hundreds of feet deep and constructed with sealed casings and annular seals—often extending 50 feet or more—specifically designed to isolate them from shallow groundwater conditions.

The District has not demonstrated:

- that these shallow monitoring wells are hydraulically connected to deeper potable aquifers, or
- that drinking water wells in Los Olivos are exceeding MCL standards

Without that connection, the foundation of this project remains unproven.

There is also a critical issue of geographic alignment.

**MW-4—the highest reading at 11.8 mg/L—is located outside the primary commercial corridor.**

Yet commercial properties are being asked to bear some of the highest financial burdens under this proposal.

That raises a basic and unavoidable question:

Why are the areas not driving the highest readings being asked to carry the greatest cost?

At present, there is a clear misalignment between where the issue exists and who is being asked to pay for it.

If the District intends to impose costs of this magnitude, it must first establish a clear nexus between source, impact, and responsibility.

There is another question that must be answered just as directly:

**Where is the legal requirement that Los Olivos must install a centralized sewer system at this time?**

Not a recommendation.

Not a preference.

Not a projection.

A requirement.

There has been no clear identification of a public health order, no widespread red-tagging of wells, and no regulatory directive mandating this specific solution.

If such a mandate exists, it should be clearly cited. If it does not, then this is a discretionary decision—and must be evaluated as one.

**And that brings this back to cost—and to common sense.**

For the financial burden being proposed, individual properties could install advanced onsite wastewater treatment systems not once, but multiple times over during the same 30-year period.

These systems are not experimental. They are widely used, approved under California standards, and designed specifically to reduce nitrogen at the source—without trenching through town, without long-term bond obligations, and without imposing uniform costs where conditions are not uniform.

**If the problem is localized, then the solution should be localized.**

**If the goal is nitrate reduction, then treating it at the source is the most direct and cost-effective approach.**

Yet the District is advancing the most expensive, most disruptive, and least flexible option first.

That is backwards.

California's own policy framework recognizes that onsite wastewater systems are not only viable, but necessary—particularly where centralized sewer systems are prohibitively expensive relative to the number of users.

So where is the analysis that compares:

- centralized collection and conveyance,
- targeted onsite upgrades in affected areas, and
- phased decentralized solutions

Not in concept—but in real, side-by-side, cost and performance terms.

Because from where this community sits, it appears that the most expensive option is being advanced before lower-cost, proven alternatives have been seriously evaluated.

That is not planning. That is assumption.

This letter is not a rejection of groundwater protection. It is a demand for proportionality, technical rigor, and accountability.

If the District intends to move forward, then it must do so transparently and completely:

- Publish potable well depth, casing, and construction data for Los Olivos
- Demonstrate any connection between shallow groundwater and drinking water aquifers
- Provide evidence of actual drinking water impairment, if it exists
- Identify the specific legal authority requiring this project
- Produce a true cost and performance comparison with decentralized alternatives

**MAKE A CASE AS TO WHY WE DO NOT NEED TO DO THIS!**

**If this project is truly necessary, then prove it.**

Show:

- that drinking water is impacted
- that the problem is widespread
- that the law requires this specific solution
- that lower-cost alternatives cannot solve the issue

Until that is done, there is no justification for imposing this level of cost, disruption, and permanent change on this community.

Without that proof, moving forward does not represent responsible governance.

It represents a railroaded outcome.

And once implemented, it cannot be undone.

Los Olivos does not need a solution imposed on it.

It needs a solution that is proven, proportional, and grounded in fact.

Until then, the only responsible action is to stop.

Until that work is done, the District has not justified the cost, the scale, or the impact of what is being proposed.

Los Olivos is being asked to take on tens of millions in infrastructure costs and hundreds of thousands in private financial burden—based on incomplete evidence and unproven assumptions.

That is not a responsible path forward.

Los Olivos deserves a solution that is targeted, technically sound, and economically survivable—not one that is driven by scale, cost, and momentum.

I expect a direct transparent response to the community, supported by data.

With respect and resolve,

**Keith Saarloos**

Resident | Business Owner | Landowner

Los Olivos, CA



**SAARLOOS + SONS**  
FAMILY • FARMING • VINEYARDS • WINE

## Keith Saarloos

Overlord

**Saarloos and sons**

Cell: 562-331-1193

Tasting Room 805-688-1200

[keith@saarloosandsons.com](mailto:keith@saarloosandsons.com)

2971 grand ave. los olivos california