

Santa Margarita Water District

invites your interest in the position of

Director of Human Resources



**Santa Margarita
Water District**

Our Mission

The Santa Margarita Water District provides our customers with quality water and wastewater service – maximizing human, environmental, and financial resources – to help guide South Orange County's water and wastewater needs into the next century.



Recruitment Services Provided by
Ralph Andersen & Associates

Outstanding Opportunity

The Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD) is tackling a period of organizational change and modernization, and is seeking to partner with an innovative, solution-oriented, and influential Director of Human Resources. This individual will be a key member of the District's executive team and will have the ear of the General Manager to make improvements. This new Director will be expected to accomplish the foundational work of Human Resources and also empowered to offer creative ideas in support of the District's core values and culture of employee development and engagement.

Meet Santa Margarita Water District

Santa Margarita Water District is a dynamic, forward-thinking agency dedicated to delivering high-quality potable water, recycled water, and wastewater services to its 220,000 customers across Southern Orange County in nine unique communities. The District is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, with each elected by the public to represent a specific division within the District and has a total annual operating budget for FY 2025-26 of \$131M. As one of the region's largest and most impactful utilities, we are committed to the highest standards of transparency, innovation, and environmental stewardship.

The District employs approximately 225 full-time employees and includes one represented employee association. Our people drive our progress, innovation, and results. Our collaborative, human-first culture fosters the sense of fun, camaraderie, and a rewarding sense of purpose as we do work that matters. Dynamic teams of intelligent individuals work collaboratively to achieve SMWD's goals and solve challenges with a common aim that fosters a unique bond that is not often found in governmental agencies.

Santa Margarita Water District's values include:

- Exemplary service excellence
- Intelligent innovation that is forward-thinking and adaptive
- Ethical fiscal responsibility and transparency
- Environmental and resource stewardship
- Employee development and leadership training
- Building relationships that strengthen communities





The Department and Position

The Director of Human Resources is an at-will position, reporting to the General Manager's Office, that provides leadership and direction to the department, ensuring a high-performance, service-oriented environment that aligns with the District's mission, vision, goals, values, and organizational culture. The department performs all full-service human resource functions (recruitment and selection, benefits and leave administration, training and development, classification and compensation, labor relations, employee relations, and performance management), as well as safety, workers' compensation, and risk management functions. As part of the District's reorganization efforts, payroll oversight (and staff) may also be transferred to this department.

The Department is currently budgeted for a total of five positions, in addition to the Director: one Safety & Risk Manager, one Senior Human Resources Analyst (classification currently under review for potential elevation), two Human Resources Analysts, and one Safety Analyst. The Department also benefits from the assistance of two full-time temporary Human Resources Analysts, who are largely charged with focusing on recruitment efforts.

The Director is expected to direct and mentor staff to achieve a highly effective and efficient team. Specific responsibilities include directing the operations of the District's human resources program (areas noted above), organizational planning and development, and related programs and services. The Director will also provide professional assistance and guidance to the District's Board of Directors, managers, and supervisors on complex issues.

The General Manager was hired in mid-2024, with a unified Board mandate to modernize the organization; rebuild the organizational culture around the principles of transparency, accountability, and excellence; and structure the entire organization (beginning with the Executive Team) for high performance.

The Ideal Candidate

The next Director of Human Resources will be a top caliber professional with a proven history of both foundational technical knowledge and change management. The successful candidate will have a passion for human resources, public service, and the mentorship of up-and-coming professionals. The Director will be energized by this changing organizational climate and embrace the opportunity to educate management and supervisors about laws, regulations, and proper procedures. They will share openly with appropriate partners (General Manager, legal counsel, etc.) to solicit feedback and context and will correspondingly create an environment where other managers come for advice and insight.

The Team prizes open communication, partnership, creativity, innovation, action, humor, and professionalism. In all leadership positions, the organization needs subject matter experts who value thoughtful, high-spirited, and collaborative communications regarding operations within their span of control. The District is fast-moving, open to change, and growth-minded, and needs executives who are confident enough in their skills to simultaneously advocate persuasively for needed action(s), admit mistakes or when broader input is needed, and/or move on after a decision is made.

A sense of humor, positive “can do” attitude, and dose of humility will ultimately lead to long-term success at SMWD. Candidates for serious consideration will need to be confident and collaborative, with a thoughtful leadership style that combines a drive for systems excellence with an understanding of how people and culture are impacted by management decisions. The selected candidate will also be a strategic thinker with the ability to understand technical issues; offer well-reasoned insight to the General Manager, executive leadership, and management on a variety of issues, including organizational re-alignment and professional development of staff; and work closely with employees to ensure they understand their role in advancing the mission and vision of the District.

Over the course of their career, the ideal candidate will have built a reputation for:

- Building excellent interpersonal relationships;
- Being innovative, entrepreneurial, and results-oriented in problem-solving;
- Demonstrating integrity and honesty;
- Serving as a thought leader and partner;
- Having an engaging personal style with good listening skills; and
- Coaching, inspiring, and mentoring staff.

Qualifying Education and Experience

The District is open to any combination of education and experience, provided that the candidate has the ability to perform the job successfully. The most typical combination is as follows:

Education: Graduation from an accredited college with a major in human resources, public administration, business, or closely related fields.

Experience: At least ten (10) years of progressively responsible generalist experience in human resource management, including at least five years of supervisory experience. Experience in a California public agency is critical.

Certifications: Certification by a public human resources association is highly desirable (e.g. PSHRA-SCP or PSHRA-CP).

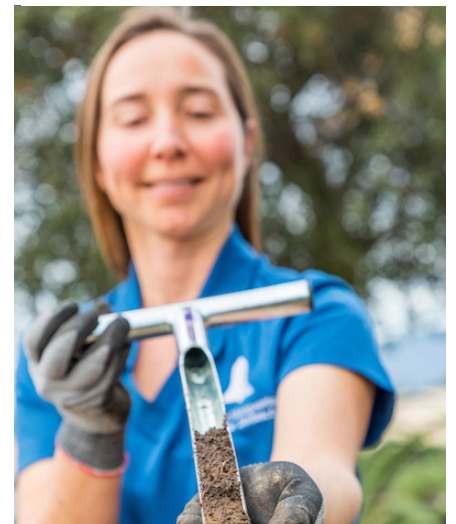


Compensation

The annual salary range for this position is from \$175,000 to \$240,000, which is currently under review. Salary will be negotiated based on the candidate's experience and qualifications.

The salary will be supported by a benefits package including:

- **CalPERS Retirement:** The Classic members' formula is 2.7% @ 55 with an employee contribution of 8%, while PEPRA members have a formula of 2% at 62 with an employee contribution of 7.5%.
- **Medical:** Multiple plans, including PPO and HMO options, are available. The District pays for 100% of the cost for the employee's coverage (not to exceed the amount of the highest HMO plan); the District will additionally contribute 50% of the premium cost for dependents.
- **Dental Insurance:** Both HMO and PPO plans are available. The District covers the employee at 100%, regardless of which plan is selected; dependent coverage is available at the District's rates.
- **Vision Insurance:** The District offers a VSP plan and pays the full cost for employees and their dependents.
- **Life Insurance:** A term life insurance benefit is provided.
- **Paid Time Off:** The District has a generous combined program for time off, with a typical starting accrual rate of 140 hours annually, which increases with years of service.
- **Holidays:** The District observes 11½ holidays per year.
- **Social Security:** The District does not pay into Social Security and provides a private disability program at no cost to the employees.
- **Other Benefits:** Other employee benefit programs are available, including deferred compensation with partial matching and a flexible spending program for medical expenses.



To Be Considered

This is a confidential recruitment and will be handled accordingly throughout the various stages of the process. Interested candidates should submit a resume and compelling cover letter, detailing your reasons for being interested in this particular position by email to apply@ralphandersen.com.

References will not be contacted until mutual interest has been established. Candidates are encouraged to apply early in the process with the first review of resumes occurring in mid-September 2025. This recruitment may close at any time once a significant pool of qualified candidates has been established. It is anticipated that the most highly qualified candidates will be invited for an on-site interview. Selection and appointment are anticipated in Fall 2025.

The Santa Margarita Water District is an Equal Opportunity Employer



www.smwd.com