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## Supervisors Expand Composting Toilet Pilot Eligibility

**August 13, 2024** – On Tuesday, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors voted to expand the eligibility for the composting toilet pilot program, opening participation to a wider range of residents. This program, the first of its kind in California, is limited to 25 participants in its initial phase but now includes the option for public agencies, such as State Parks, to collaborate by hosting public composting toilet facilities on state properties like beaches, trailheads, and parks.

Eligibility also now extends to any County resident with a functioning septic system, those with an active single-family home building permit, and all 154 CZU fire-impacted households currently rebuilding their homes. By broadening the program, the County aims to gather more feedback on this alternative sanitation solution.

“Rural residents are looking for alternatives to the state's impossible new septic laws,” said Supervisor Manu Koenig, who proposed the program. “At the same time, we need to be prepared in case a disaster disrupts our sanitation systems.” When the Pajaro River flooded in 2023, there was a moment when authorities worried the levee might break at another spot, potentially knocking out the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Facility. If that had happened, 60,000 residents in south county would have been left without working toilets. “We need a Plan B for people to go number 2,” said Supervisor Koenig.

The pilot program will be managed by GiveLove, a California-based nonprofit with extensive experience in Container-Based Sanitation (CBS) systems, including post-disaster efforts in Haiti with Habitat for Humanity, with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and WASH sector work in Nicaragua, Colombia, and East Africa. Ryan Smith Consulting is the co-lead on the project. The CBS system involves using containerized toilets maintained hygienically with sawdust and biobags, and then composted at a central location. “We want to encourage all interested parties to contact us, we need volunteers for this important research project,” says Alisa Keesey, GiveLove’s director. Keesey and Smith are now ready to apply their expertise to support families in Santa Cruz County, and to develop sustainable sanitation solutions that do not require water.

Benefits of Participation:

- **Hygienic and Safe:** The system ensures sanitary conditions through regular maintenance and the use of natural materials
- **Environmental Sustainability:** The composting toilet system reduces water usage
- **Expert Guidance:** Receive personalized support from GiveLove's experienced team for smooth installation and operation.

All interested in participating in the six-month composting toilet program should contact **Alisa Keesey, GiveLove's Program Director** at (831) 325-3187 or via e-mail [info@santacruzcbspilot.org](mailto:info@santacruzcbspilot.org).