

# DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING

SANTA MARGARITA WATER DISTRICT | RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, CALIFORNIA

**ANNUAL SALARY:** The expected hiring range is **\$211,159-\$291,084 DOE/DOQ**  
(pending final Board approval)



CAREER OPPORTUNITY

**T**HE SANTA MARGARITA WATER DISTRICT (SMWD) is seeking a strategic and collaborative Director of Engineering to lead the District's Engineering Department at a time of significant infrastructure activity and long-term capital investment. This role is responsible for leading the coordination of capital design and delivery, construction management, and development services for one of the region's most complex and dynamic water districts. Working closely with the departments of Operations and Planning & Water Resources, the Director of Engineering will support consistent project delivery and long-term infrastructure needs for the District's drinking water, wastewater, and recycled water systems. They will oversee departmental staff, develop department operating and capital budgets, collaborate closely with executive leadership, and engage regularly with SMWD's Board of Directors. The ideal candidate has a strong background in water and wastewater engineering, experience leading complex programs, a passion for water resources stewardship, and a commitment to high quality service to the community. *Advance infrastructure that strengthens communities and sustains them for the future; apply today!*



# THE COMMUNITY

**N**ESTLED IN THE CANYONS OF SOUTH ORANGE COUNTY and not far from the bustle of the Los Angeles metro area, Santa Margarita Water District is headquartered in beautiful Rancho Santa Margarita. The District serves ten distinctive communities, including the cities of Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, and San Juan Capistrano, as well as the unincorporated communities of Coto de Caza, Las Flores, Ladera Ranch, Talega in San Clemente, and the Rancho Mission Viejo villages of Sendero, Esencia, and Rienda. With year-round temperate weather, proximity to ocean beaches, and set against breathtaking canyons, these communities offer a slower pace than the northern end of the County, while still providing easy access to all the amenities of the second-largest metro area in the US.

Residents enjoy access to parks, trails, and nearby natural areas that support an active, outdoor-oriented lifestyle year-round, along with highly regarded educational institutions and an engaged community culture. From the meandering streets, period architecture, and quaint historic downtown of San Juan Capistrano; to family-friendly Mission Viejo, with its excellent schools and beautiful recreational lake; and Rancho Mission Viejo's meticulously master-planned communities, incorporating thoughtful touches from wellness centers to summer camps, the District's service area reflects a diverse mix of historic neighborhoods and modern amenities. These communities are also characterized by responsible growth and a strong emphasis on environmental stewardship and long-term sustainability—values that align closely with SMWD's mission.

## SMWD BY THE NUMBERS



1 Groundwater Treatment Plant



233 FACILITIES



1,700 MILES of Pipeline



Industry First Advanced Recycled Water Treatment Plant



2 ADVANCED WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS



9,500 Acre-Foot of Recycled Water Reservoirs

[Click here](#) for more details about SMWD's complex infrastructure



# THE ORGANIZATION

**T**HE SANTA MARGARITA WATER DISTRICT (SMWD) is a fiscally healthy and sustainability-focused retail water district located in southern Orange County, California, providing high-quality drinking water, recycled water, and wastewater services to 200,000+ residents across a 111 square mile service area. Governed by a five-member elected Board of Directors and with an annual budget of approximately \$170 million, the District is at a pivotal moment as it works to build and align a new organizational structure focused on innovation, collaborative leadership, and long-term sustainability. With a mid-sized workforce of over 200 employees, the District has added a number of strategic new positions for this fiscal year, with the goal of centering operational agility and targeted growth to meet current demand and future needs. Leveraging meaningful regional, state, and federal impact in water policy and resource management, SMWD is recognized for its award-winning conservation efforts and campaigns, and places a strong emphasis on leadership development through a well-received internal leadership training program. As the District continues to grow as a cohesive, high-performing organization, it seeks team-oriented leaders who value accountability, collaboration, and service excellence in advancing SMWD's mission and public trust.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DISTRICT



CLICK BUTTON

# THE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

**T**HE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR the planning, design, inspection, and construction management of the District's capital infrastructure and private development projects. The Department oversees engineering standards, plan review, permitting, and construction coordination to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and District specifications. Through its work, the Engineering Department supports the delivery of reliable water, recycled water, and wastewater infrastructure while advancing long-term system sustainability. The Department's efforts are essential to maintaining and enhancing the infrastructure that serves the District's diverse communities.

[READ MORE](#)



## THE JOB

**T**HE DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING PROVIDES STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP over the District's Engineering Department, with responsibility for long-range capital project planning, construction management, and development services during the largest and most complex capital program in the District's history. This role ensures that water, recycled water, and wastewater projects are planned and managed in alignment with District priorities, regulatory requirements, and long-term sustainability goals. The Director leads development and implementation of the multi-year Capital Improvement Program, oversees consultant and contractor performance, provides leadership and direction to department staff, and establishes clear priorities, systems, and accountability across the department, including stewardship of the operational budget. Working closely with executive leadership, the Board of Directors, and internal partners—including the Director of Planning & Water Resources and the Director of Operations—the Director serves as a trusted advisor on engineering and infrastructure matters and regularly presents to the Board to support informed decision-making.

# THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

**T**HE IDEAL CANDIDATE IS AN EXPERIENCED WATER AND WASTEWATER ENGINEERING leader with a proven record of delivering complex projects and leading capital planning and construction management programs. They bring strong technical expertise across water and wastewater systems, leveraging their experience to effectively guide consultants while supporting and developing internal staff. The ideal Director will understand the unique water challenges facing Southern California, while thinking more globally about how to approach them. Operating with a systems perspective, they understand how engineering, planning, operations, and water resources intersect, integrating capital planning with long-term infrastructure needs to support District-wide objectives. A confident and decisive leader, they provide clear direction for their team and bring structure to highly visible programs, while building strong relationships through clear communication and consistent follow-through with staff, executive leadership, the Board of Directors, and external partners.

Santa Margarita Water District is building an intentional culture of collaboration, innovation, and forward momentum. Leaders who combine vision with execution will thrive in this environment, and those with the genuine desire to work together, communicate, and build consensus will find a like-minded team, and the opportunity to shape the future of water resource management in this dynamic region.

## ***Core Competencies of the Ideal Candidate will include:***

**Strategic Thinking:** Anticipates long-term organizational needs, aligns operational goals with larger priorities, and creatively approaches problem-solving.

**Team Orientation:** Approaches challenges and day-to-day tasks as an opportunity to collaborate with talented colleagues and staff.

**Communication:** Listens actively and seeks to understand; maintains an intentionally high-volume, real-time communication flow with executive leadership team to ensure shared context and strategic alignment.

**Relationship-Building:** Builds trust and credibility with executive leadership, the Board of Directors, staff, and external partners.

**Talent Development:** Prioritizes mentorship and knowledge-sharing to empower staff and foster growth; actively promotes leadership development and succession planning.

**Change Agility:** Remains adaptable to

evolving organizational needs, builds change-resilient teams, and cultivates a solutions-focused mindset.

**Innovation:** Acts as a driving force advancing service excellence, forward-thinking projects, and thoughtful organizational change; creates space for new ideas, risk-taking, and out-of-the-box thinking.

**Vision:** Employs big-picture thinking, works collaboratively with the executive leadership team to take cutting-edge ideas to execution, and communicates organizational vision compellingly to staff to build alignment and buy-in.

**Mission Focus:** Believes in and models SMWD's mission, vision, and values including service excellence, environmental sustainability and resource stewardship, fiscal responsibility and transparency, and strengthening communities through interagency and regional relationships; creates an inclusive environment where employees feel supported and connected to the District's mission.



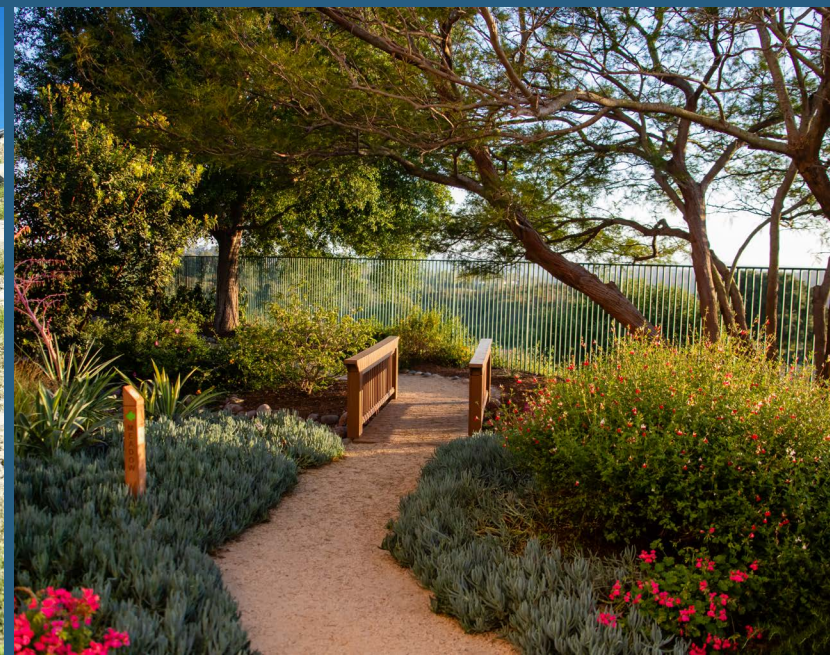
## Employment Standards

Any combination of experience and training that would likely provide the required knowledge and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the knowledge and abilities would be:

**Education:** Equivalent to a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in civil engineering or a related field.

**Experience:** 10+ years of progressively responsible experience in civil engineering, water/wastewater infrastructure, and/or water resources, including at least three (3) years of managerial level experience.

**Please Note:** Possession of a valid certificate of registration as a Professional Civil Engineer issued by the California State Board of Registration for Civil and Professional Engineers is required.





## Salary & Benefits

The expected hiring range is **\$211,159–\$291,084 DOE/DOQ** (pending final Board approval), **PLUS** an attractive benefits package that includes:

**CalPERS Retirement:** The Classic members' formula is 2.7% at 55 with an employee contribution of 8%, while Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (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 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 the selected plan; dependent coverage is available at the District's rates.

**Life Insurance:** A term life insurance benefit is provided.

**Vision Insurance:** The District offers a Vision Service Plan (VSP) and pays the full cost for employees and their dependents.

**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.

## How to Apply

For first consideration, apply by **MARCH 18** at:

WBCP JOB BOARD



**SAVE THE DATES.** Round one virtual interviews will take place on **APRIL 7**. Finalists will move forward to round two in-person interviews on **APRIL 17**. *Selected candidates must be available for both dates.*

**QUESTIONS?** Please contact your recruiter, **Shani Pearce**, with any inquiries:

**866.929.WBCP (9227)** toll free **541.664.0376** direct  
[shani@wbcpinc.com](mailto:shani@wbcpinc.com)