

A Quarterly Newsletter brought to you by the collaborative efforts of:

- Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company
- Pauma Valley Roadway Association
- Pauma Valley Community Services District
- With special thanks to our guest author, Rhonda Curtis

August 11th, 2025

4th Edition

Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company

By Chuck Bandy, Board President

Contractors for Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Co. are nearing completion of a major rehabilitation project on one of two potable water storage tanks located on Pauma Heights Rd. The project began in 2021 with a video survey of the tank's interior and a resulting scope of work that the Board divided into two projects. In 2024, OSHA safety and compliance concerns were addressed at both tanks. The remaining rehabilitation project, slated to cost \$200,000, was included in Rancho Pauma's CIP projects for FY 24-25. The project includes a complete revamp of the tank interior with a thorough abrasive cleaning and the patching of weak spots in the flooring and walls. It also includes a complete epoxy coating applied to all interior and exterior surfaces. The coating is applied in accordance with American Water Works Association standards for potable water tanks. This project has been planned for over two years and is included within the \$607,500 CIP budget for FY 24-25. Other items included in the CIP budget are major well rehabilitation work and several large-scale valve replacement projects which are scheduled for later this year.

Chuck Bandy, Board President



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Know Your Grove: The Legacy and Labor Behind Agua Tibia Ranch

By Rhonda Curtis

Recently, I had the privilege of entering the gates of Agua Tibia Ranch, a 1,307 acre property nestled in the valley, east of Pala Casino off Highway 76. Greg Kamin, the ranch manager and one of the family owners, is a busy man, but he generously made time to give me a tour around the full perimeter while sharing the history of this extraordinary land.



Every Monday morning, rain or shine, Greg begins his week driving the full stretch of Agua Tibia Ranch, winding past citrus groves and avocado trees, listening to the pulse of the land.

"You can't manage what you don't monitor," he says. And after more than a decade of farming this fourth-generation ranch, Kamin has made it his mission to know every tree—not just the thriving ones, but also those that whisper of trouble, bearing the scars of sunblotch or stubbornly refusing to fruit.

This is not the story of a nostalgic gentleman farmer. It's the story of someone who inherited a legacy and then had to earn it.

Agua Tibia Ranch is steeped in over 200 years of agricultural and cultural history. Across from the Wilderness Gardens Preserve and flanked by the canyons that bear its name, the land was once home to Native American communities drawn by warm springs and year-round water. The name *Agua Tibia* means

"warm water", referring to the springs that once bubbled freely from the earth and were believed to have healing properties. Then in the 1920's a well was installed by a previous owner and the water was diverted to stay underground instead of pooling above ground.

In the early 1800s, a man named Manuelito Cota took control of the area. Whether he was a Spaniard or a Luiseño Indian appointed by the Spanish is unclear, but records agree on one thing: Cota ruled harshly. He built canals with slave labor and oversaw the land from an adobe fortress. Eventually, a local uprising overthrew him—just one dramatic chapter in the ranch's layered past.

Greg's maternal grandfather, Hartwell Bradford, purchased Agua Tibia Ranch in 1937. Farming was not new to the Bradford family. Hartwell's father, Greg's great-grandfather, A.S. Bradford, was a citrus grower and the founder of Placentia, California. When urban development pushed the family citrus groves out of Orange County, Hartwell and his brother Warren, both engineers, brought their expertise to the ranch. They introduced innovative practices: replacing ditches with galvanized pipe, designing early under-tree irrigation systems, and experimenting with water management techniques long before such methods were standard.

For over 50 years, the ranch was faithfully managed by Greg's Uncle **Bud Bradford**, (Warren's son) who oversaw operations from the 1960s until his death in 2012. With a quiet, steady hand, Bud knew the land intimately and maintained its traditions with care.

When Bud passed away, the future of the ranch felt uncertain. At the time, Greg was running an auto shop and pursuing real estate ventures—far removed from the rhythms of agriculture. But when he saw his cousin struggling to manage the land alone, something shifted.

Pauma Valley Roadway Association

By George Pink, Board President

There is no comment from the Pauma Valley Roadway Association Received this quarter.

George Pink, Board President



Greg decided to learn how to farm.

“Farming is a horrible business model,” he said with a laugh. “You can do everything right, and one storm can unravel it all.”

Greg dove in headfirst—attending seminars, reading obsessively, and surrounding himself with experts. One key mentor was Gary Bender, a respected avocado consultant; Greg became his first private client. But more than anything, he listened to the land and to the most consistent piece of advice: *get out into the grove*. See it. Touch it. Know it.

Driving past the grove of avocado trees, Greg explained how he mapped out each tree and gives them a color code every year. “It’s excessive,” he admits. “But I learned fast. This allows me to track root rot progression, monitor pests, spot trees that never produced, and give detailed instructions to my workers.”

His approach to leadership is as hands-on as his farming. “Do everything you ask your employees to do—at least once. It gives you reasonable expectations of how long a task should take and helps you understand what they may need to do the job effectively,” he said.

That principle has shaped the culture at Agua Tibia Ranch. Whether it’s crawling into pump sheds, hauling irrigation pipe, or pruning stubborn branches, Greg works beside his team, learning every task from the ground up. It’s not about micromanagement, it’s about credibility. “when you’ve done the hard, dirty, repetitive work yourself, you lead with more humility. You also don’t ask for the impossible,” Greg said.

That respect for labor, combined with Greg’s relentless curiosity, has helped him build not just a productive ranch but a workplace culture rooted in mutual respect and pride.

“You can’t manage what you don’t monitor”

Greg Kamin

The more he observed, the more the land revealed its quirks. Despite textbook science, Greg discovered that A and B pollinizer avocado trees don’t overlap on this land the way they should. Sunblotch, a feared disease, was present, but not spreading. One block got both the hottest and coldest temperatures. Another had clay soil that held too much water. Everything depended on microclimates.

“Just because something works for my neighbor doesn’t mean it works here,” he said. “You have to **know your grove**”.

Agua Tibia’s greatest blessing and biggest challenge is water. The ranch isn’t connected to municipal supplies and instead relies on a patchwork of historic water rights dating back to the early 1800s. Water flows from fracture wells, alluvial wells, and canyon diversion rights. The cost savings are real. So is the responsibility.

“People think water is simple. It’s not,” Greg said. “But that’s what we have, and we make it work.”

As we stood by the two water reservoirs, one with warm water from the hot springs and the other with fresh cool water, Greg explained how flow and pressure fluctuate, how algae clog pipes and how drip irrigation—standard in modern agriculture—doesn’t work here. Add state inspections, meter certifications

“Farming is a horrible business model, you can do everything right, and one storm can unravel it all.”

Greg Kamin

and emergency reservoir plans, and water becomes not just a resource, but a full-time job.

Driving the ranch’s winding roads, Greg pointed out what is believed to be the oldest Valencia orange tree in California, thought to have been planted around 1870. The tree stands gnarled, painted white to protect it from sunburn with a fence around it to keep the deer from eating the newly grafted branches. It’s not only a living monument to the ranch’s endurance, but just one more example of Greg’s deep respect for the land and the legacy he’s determined to preserve.

Looking to the future, Greg has created a digital document titled *How to Run the Ranch*—a living manual that includes everything from payroll steps to irrigation strategies. He also built a color-coded spreadsheet mapping each avocado tree’s yield, health, and needs. Walking every row, he tracked problem trees, identified patterns, and made decisions one tree at a time. Each became a profit center or a puzzle to solve.

“When Uncle Bud died, we realized how much wasn’t written down,” Greg said. “If something happens to me, I want someone to be able to step in and keep this going.”

Agua Tibia Ranch is more than land. It’s a living record of those who worked it, fought for it, and shaped it across generations. And today, thanks to Greg Kamin’s stewardship, it continues to thrive—tree by tree, map by map, Monday after Monday.



Agua Tibia Ranch



From the General Manager's Desk

By Eric Steinlicht, General Manager

Happy August, Pauma Valley!

The District recently held its first introduction to the Cost-of-Service Analysis (COSA), where new rate recommendations were introduced by our consultant. This comprehensive process will allow the District to sustainably provide services for many years to come. I encourage everyone to attend our Board meetings so that your valuable insight can be considered during this critical organizational juncture.

Please note, our upcoming meeting this month (August) will **not** include COSA-related discussions due to the consultant's unavailability. However, in **September**, the COSA will be a key item of business, and I highly encourage your participation!

Summary of 2025 Updates:

- **ACH Payments Now Available**
We're excited to offer ACH

Payments: making rate changes easier for you to manage, it also ensures on-time payments and simplifies the billing process for everyone. Take advantage of this modern and convenient service!

- **New Website Live!**
Be sure to visit regularly for newsletters, customer notifications, Board meeting materials and much more. We're committed to keeping you informed and maintaining a high level of transparency.
- **Cybersecurity Grant Awarded: \$244,000**
A significant achievement for the District that strengthens our defenses against modern threats and helping our efforts towards reducing future rate increases.
- **New Gate Contractor**
Noticed a reduction in downtime? That's thanks to our excellent new repair team. We're fortunate to have them on board!

- **Wastewater Cost Savings!**
Through operational improvements and the generosity of Casino Pauma, we're saving between \$50,000 to \$60,000 annually. A big thank you for supporting our community!

As the COSA proceeds as planned, Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDU's) have been largely identified as incorrect. The District post the separation with its neighboring entity has also created the need for reorganization. With a consistent and transparent rate model, accurate EDU accounting, and a lean restructured organization, we will be set up for ongoing success.

Please consider joining us at our Board meetings – your participation and feedback is welcome during this COSA. The next Board meeting:

**Monday, August 25th, 2025,
10:00 AM**

Best Regards,

Upcoming Board Meetings

- **Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company**
WHEN: MONDAY, August 18th, 2025, AT 3:00 PM
WHERE: 33129 Cole Grade Road, Pauma Valley CA 92061
<https://www.ranchopaumamwc.com/>
- **Pauma Valley Roadway Association**
WHEN: TUESDAY, October 14th, 2025, AT 10:00 AM
WHERE: RTJ Room, Pauma Valley Country Club
<https://www.roadwayassn.org/>
- **Pauma Valley Community Services District**
WHEN: MONDAY, August 25th, 2025, AT 10:00 AM
WHERE: 33129 Cole Grade Road, Pauma Valley CA 92061
<https://www.paumavalleycsd.ca.gov/>

