

JANUARY-APRIL 2004

# Pipelining

WASHINGTON SUBURBAN SANITARY COMMISSION


[www.wsscwater.com](http://www.wsscwater.com)

## *Dear Valued Customer:*

'Expect the unexpected' has become a common practice for us as we work to provide you with excellent water and wastewater services. Hurricane Isabel and other storms that battered our region during the past six months certainly tested the preparedness and responsiveness of area utilities. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of WSSC employees, we continued to supply you with safe, reliable service. There was no need to boil WSSC water! Years of sound planning and engineering incorporating the use of elevated storage tanks in our distribution system played key roles in our ability to deliver clean water, even during power outages.

While the sudden, tragic events of September 11 are behind us, we continue to address their lasting impacts on our operations. A number of facility improvements are being accelerated because they offer enhanced security benefits in addition to upgrading our products and services. It is primarily for this reason that we are proposing up to a 3 percent increase in combined water and sewer rates beginning July 1. We also seek to further protect your health and the environment by increasing our investment in improving our water and wastewater infrastructure.

As you know, WSSC has not had a rate increase in 6 years. Through work efficiencies and downsizing, we have absorbed the costs of inflation over those years. However, it is now necessary to implement a modest rate increase. For average residential customers, this would be approximately 4 cents a day, \$3.46 a quarter, or \$12 - \$15 a year. We will continue to make every effort to cut costs to help keep your rates stable.

  
General Manager

## Seneca Helps Save the Bay

We recently opened the new, 20 million gallons-per-day (MGD) Seneca Wastewater Treatment Plant that uses state-of-the-art biological and chemical processes to remove 64 percent more nitrogen and 77 percent more phosphorus than the original 5 MGD plant. Built to handle a projected 45 percent increase in wastewater flows between now and 2020 from upper Montgomery County, the \$70 million plant completes the addition of biological nutrient removal capabilities at all five of WSSC's major wastewater treatment plants. Over the past 15 years, WSSC has reduced nitrogen discharges by 51 percent while wastewater flows increased 22 percent. WSSC wastewater plants are meeting, or doing better than, Chesapeake Bay program goals for nitrogen and phosphorus reductions.

## In Search Of Cleaner, Better Water

Continuing our efforts to provide you with safe, clean drinking water, we recently started a comprehensive study of a submerged Potomac River water intake pipe. A submerged channel intake would provide access to a cleaner, more stable source water supply — mitigating the negative effects of sediment, solids and microorganisms entering the river upstream from WSSC's current intake. A submerged intake would also avoid problems created by river debris — leaves and ice that occasionally clog the existing shoreline intake. The feasibility study will address possible locations, construction methods, costs, environmental impacts and outreach activities, and should be complete in early 2005.

## Know and Protect Your Water Source

WSSC and the Patuxent Reservoirs Watershed Protection Group are planning April Earth Month activities including a library program for tots and school-age children, a canoe trip, tree planting, an Azalea Garden cleanup, and fishing workshops. Please check our web site at: [www.wsscwater.com](http://www.wsscwater.com).

### Getting a Clear Read

Please help our meter readers do their jobs more efficiently:

- Clear leaves, snow and ice from your meter.
- Keep dogs away from your meter area.
- Do not park vehicles over your meter.
- Unlock gates for access to backyard remote devices.
- Avoid planting flowers, trees, or shrubbery that will hide or restrict meter access.
- Cut back grass, weeds, shrubs, bushes, and trees around your meter.
- Do not lay gravel, new walks or driveways over your meter.

Thanks!

### SDC Supports Growth

Each year WSSC collects a System Development Charge (SDC), a charge to new development to pay for the major treatment and transmission facilities needed to accommodate growth. For fiscal year 2003, which ended June 30, 2003, SDC revenue collections were sufficient to cover growth related costs. In prior years, growth costs exceeded SDC revenues and WSSC issued \$25.2 million in new water/sewer rate-supported debt to cover the shortfall. The impact on a typical WSSC customer was \$3.67 annually. However, since July 1, 2002, SDC revenues are used to service the customers' portion of the debt resulting in no impact on the customers' bill.

### Copper Pipe Pinhole Leak Update

In an attempt to help customers reduce future copper pipe pinhole leaks in their home plumbing, WSSC began adding a very small amount of the safe corrosion inhibitor orthophosphate to water supplies in mid-November. The tasteless, odorless, colorless additive potentially forms a protective layer on the interior surface of copper pipes. More than 50 percent of water utilities nationwide safely use phosphates — including the City of Rockville and Fairfax, Carroll, Calvert and Frederick counties.

### A Gift Worth Giving

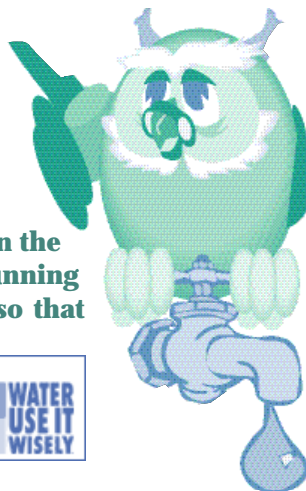
WSSC recently sponsored its 3rd annual Customer Care Fair and raised nearly \$4,000 for the Water Fund. Administered by the Salvation Army, the Water Fund helps eligible residential customers pay for water/wastewater services that are in jeopardy of disconnection. This worthwhile program is primarily maintained through the generous donations of people just like you, so please remember to add a contribution to the Water Fund when you pay your quarterly bill. Thank you.



### Water, Use It Wisely

#### WATER-SAVING TIP

Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator instead of running the tap for cold drinks, so that every drop goes down you and not the drain.



#### TIP #3 - Cease the Grease

What could happen if you pour grease down the drain?

- Sewage backups in your home, possibly resulting in a health hazard and damage to your floors, furniture and personal possessions.
- Sewage backups in manholes, potentially polluting creeks, streams and the Chesapeake Bay.
- Increased maintenance costs that may have to be passed along to all ratepayers.

*Help yourself, your neighbor and the environment - don't pour grease down the drain!*

