

Wipes Clog Pipes (Petaluma Valley Hospital's Experience)

Petaluma's Industrial Waste Inspection Program brings the City's Environmental Compliance Inspector to Petaluma Valley Hospital annually to check for waste disposal compliance. During the 2009 inspection the City's Inspector was talking with Gary Tovas, the facility contact at Petaluma Valley Hospital, about the ongoing disinfectant wipe issue. Gary had mentioned that the hospital also had a wipe issue; there were having problems keeping the wipes from clogging the hospital's sanitary sewer lateral. The City's Inspector informed Gary that the disinfecting wipes caused a lot of problems in the City's collection system as well as at the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility. The Inspector informed Gary that wipes should not be flushed down the toilet but placed into the trash.

During the 2010 inspection of Petaluma Valley Hospital the City's Inspector asked how their program addressing the wipe problem was going. Gary informed the inspector that Petaluma Valley Hospital has placed a poster in every bathroom warning patients and staff not to flush non-flushable items, including wipes, down the toilet. Petaluma Valley Hospital also conducted trainings for all existing staff and all new staff about proper wipe disposal. When Gary was asked about clogs in their sewer lateral he was proud to state that they had not had a clog in six months.

By taking these simple steps Petaluma Valley Hospital was able to eliminate a costly problem and assist in reducing the disinfectant wipe problem for the City of Petaluma. Unfortunately for the City, fighting the wipe problem does not stop there. Disinfectant wipes clog the City's sanitary sewers and the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility. **The City is asking you to help.** All wipes are problematic once flushed and even the products labeled flushable can clog our systems. By flushing wipes you are running the risk of clogging your own lateral which could require costly services of a plumber. The Department of Water Resources and Conservation would like to remind everyone that wipes should be placed in the trash.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Water Field Office: 778-4546
 Ellis Creek: 776-3777
 Billing: 778-4550

Website: <http://cityofpetaluma.net/wrcd/index.html>



Summer 2010 The Waterworks

A Publication of the Petaluma Department of Water Resources & Conservation



Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility



Aerial of Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility

The Petaluma City Council accepted the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility in May 2010. The City's largest ever infrastructure project was delivered safely, on time, and within budget. The total construction cost was \$115,857,215. This facility replaced the City's circa 1938 wastewater treatment plant. The facility treats an average of 6.7 million gallons/day or 372 average swimming pools. During the height of construction approximately 125 trades people occupied the site pouring 22,000 yards of concrete for 54 structures, installing 96,000' of underground pipeline, 58,000' of pipe above ground, and 46,000' of wires that energize and control the facility. The City obtained a State Revolving Loan for the construction of the new plant which provides low interest rates saving the public approximately \$60,000,000 in interest over conventional bonding mechanisms. The Coastal Conservancy and Open Space Districts provided \$4,200,000 to develop community access. Hundreds of people a week hike the trails, ride their bikes, and walk their dogs at the publically accessible portions of the plant located at 3890 Cypress Drive. The publically accessible portions of the site are open on a daily basis from 6 am until dusk. Check the City website for tour schedule.

Your Water Resources are operated within an Enterprise System, governed by the City of Petaluma, heavily regulated by the Federal and State governments. This department is responsible for delivery of potable water, collection and treatment of sewage, production and distribution of recycled water, surface water collection and routing, storm water monitoring, and participation in the regional watershed protection and management.

Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility Wins Award

Petaluma's recycling facility won the American Public Works Association 2010 environmental project of the year for Northern California. The facility combines state-of-the-art wastewater treatment technology with natural wetlands treatment, and has been operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week since January 2009. From October to May the facility is permitted to release treated water into Petaluma River. The new facility has greatly improved the quality of the water discharged. The new treatment plant removes over 98% of the organic and solids sent by residents and industry as sewage. The water quality has improved significantly compared to the water produced by the City's circa 1938 plant.

Monthly Utility Billing

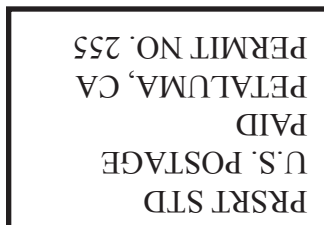
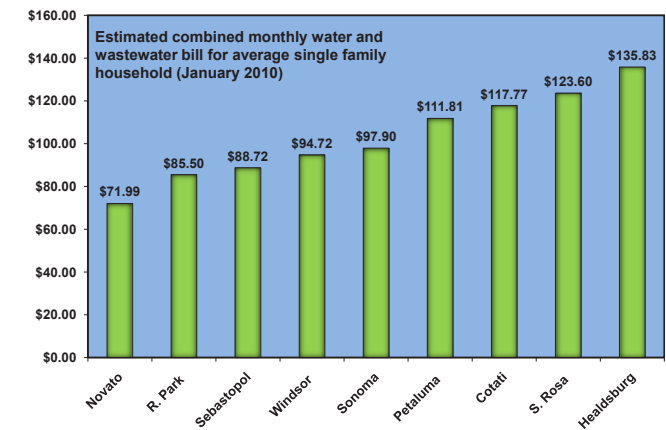
The City of Petaluma utility bills are now being issued on a monthly basis. The meters will continue to be read on a bimonthly basis. The meter readings capture approximately 60 days of water consumption. One half of this consumption will be billed upon completion of reading all of the meters in the billing cycle. The remaining half of the meter consumption will be billed approximately 25 days after the first bill is issued. One half of the water and wastewater base service charges will appear on the first bill, and the second half will appear on the next bill. Wastewater winter sewer averages have been reduced to one half of the bimonthly winter sewer average.

SCWA Raises Cost of Water

In April 2010, the Sonoma County Board of Directors raised rates 6.94%. This follows two consecutive year raises of 11% each. The City has adopted increases over a 5-year period to meet budget needs for the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility. Water cost increases have been absorbed for the past 3 years through adjustments to the operations and maintenance budgets. Since the cost of our community's water is such a significant percentage of our water charges, the ability to continue to absorb increases will be significantly reduced; for example, the June bill for the community's water supplies was over \$507,000.

Petaluma's Rates Remain Competitive

As shown in the chart below, Petaluma's combined monthly water and wastewater bills will remain competitive with other nearby communities. This comparison is for a typical single family household with an annual average water use of 8,976 gallons per month and an average wastewater use of 5,984 gallons per month. This chart is a useful resource for benchmarking Petaluma's utility rates.



Transform Your Unused Lawn to a Low-Water Use Landscape and Save Money on Your Water Bill

The new Mulch Madness Program offers customers free supplies for sheet mulching unwanted turf areas. The Mulch Madness Program provides customers with an incentive to replace their existing turf with mulch and low water use plants. The City is offering free mulch, compost, cardboard, irrigation supplies and a discount coupon to a local native plant nursery to customers who commit to sheet mulching their existing turf. The City will deliver the mulch, compost and card board to each account at no cost to the customer. The customer will be issued a discount coupon to the local nursery for plants and to a local irrigation supplier for a free drip irrigation retrofit kit. The kit will include all materials necessary to convert a pop-up spray system into a drip irrigation system. A detailed instructional brochure is available on-line at <http://cityofpetaluma.net/wrcd/mulch-madness-program.html> to show customers exactly how to sheet mulch, convert their irrigation, and plant natives.

If lawn conversion is not right for you then you may want to consider investing in a SMART irrigation controller. SMART controllers utilize satellite technology to irrigate your landscape as needed based on the current weather conditions. For more information about the SMART controller rebate program, check the City website at <http://cityofpetaluma.net/wrcd/smart-irrigation-controller-rebate.html>.

In addition to the new Mulch Madness Program, the Petaluma Water Conservation Programs can help you reduce your water use and save money on your water bill. Water saving tips, links to additional resources and Petaluma's Water Conservation Program information are available on-line at <http://cityofpetaluma.net/wrcd/waterconservation.html>. Take advantage of our free programs and rebates including the following:

Residential Rebates

- Free Water-Wise House Call Program (Water Use Evaluation)
- Free Water Efficient Devices
- High Efficiency Toilet (HET) Rebate
- High Efficiency Clothes Washer Rebate

Commercial Rebates

- Commercial High Efficiency Toilet Rebate
- Commercial High Efficiency Clothes Washer Rebate
- Smart Irrigation Controller Rebate

Not Trashing the Storm Drains

Storm drains in the City of Petaluma transport water directly to local creeks which drain to the Petaluma River and ultimately flow to the San Francisco Bay without treatment. This means trash and other pollutants washed down storm drains end up in our creeks and rivers. Trash can form large accumulations in urban creeks, like Washington Creek, which can impact water quality, detract from the beauty of local urban creek areas, hamper recreational use of the Petaluma River, and potentially hinder flood control protection. Everyone can help by throwing trash in the proper receptacle. If you see trash in the street in front of your home or business, pick it up and put it in a trash can before the trash is swept into the storm drain system and into the closest creek. Minimize the amount of trash you generate by using reusable or recyclable materials when possible!

Flood Warning

The City of Petaluma has a flood warning system that allows City employees to monitor stream levels during winter storms. The monitoring gauges transmit a radio signal to the Department of Water Resources and Conservation, allowing us to watch the stream levels from a computer in the office. The sites start in Penngrove and end at 'D' Street at the River. Monitoring the stream levels, storm patterns and rainfall intensity, allows the City to know when local flooding may occur and respond to those locations. The DWR&C is assisting Public Works in updating the Flood Management Plan for the City, a document mandated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). In addition the City is currently working to update the community's FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps with the goal of completing the remapping in the Spring of 2011.

Flood Reduction Projects

The City's Storm water maintenance crew completed a number of small projects to reduce localized flooding events. These are located on St. Augustine Circle, D Street near Copeland Street, and North Water Street at Washington Street. Remaining projects scheduled for this summer are improvements to the Steamer Park Swale and the McNear Avenue drop inlet. Larger projects will be undertaken as staff time and budget permit.

Community Work Day July 10 and 11, 2010

Residents from the Village Meadows Subdivision (Flannigan Way, Baranof, Culpepper and Maria Drive) joined staff from the Department of Water Resources & Conservation (DWR&C) and Parks & Recreation Division of Public Works Department, for a two-day work effort to restore this stretch of Lynch Creek to a more attractive habitat for animals and people, and to reduce the invasive non-native species such as the Himalayan Blackberry, dead branches, trash, and poison oak. Two weeks of work by the Youth Ecology Corp, managed by Petaluma People Services Center (PPSC) preceded the work days to clear a good portion of the blackberry growth.

This area, adjacent to the creekside public path, is planned to be planted this fall, through another community work effort, with native understory plants and trees along this length of Lynch Creek.

Neighborhood participation was organized by local resident, Claudia Martinez-Giesen, and the City effort was managed by DWR&C's staff member James Lopez. The DWR&C goal is to implement Neighborhood Creek Stewardship Programs. Call James Lopez at 778-4546 to obtain information on initiating a Creek Stewardship Program.



The System that Time Forgot

When the City of Petaluma was founded the sewer system was a combined routing system for sewage and rainwater. All the water, regardless of origin, was collected and routed through the same pipe directly to the Petaluma River, thankfully times have changed. At that time the system was predominantly Vitrified Clay, Iron, and Corrugated Metal Pipe. In the Early 1930's the system was significantly improved with the design and construction of the Hopper Street Wastewater Treatment Plant. The sewage was being collected, routed and treated and not just discharged into the River. The system has grown over the years to serve the various diverse needs of this community ranging from industrial dairy and poultry production to residential homes and to comply with complex government regulations. The Hopper Street Plant served this community for 74 years and was officially shutdown in 2009. The start-up of the new Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility is another step forward for the community similar to the steps taken in the 30's.

Unfortunately some of the original improvements still exist in the system. In 2008 the Water Street North Sewer Main Replacement project removed a 320' section of the old sewer & storm system from Washington St. to the Copeland pump station. The pipe in this case was Corrugated Metal Pipe about 70 years old, but when the pipe was dug up the majority of it wasn't there, only a rust stain and the supporting soil. This is a sample of other metal sewer lines in that area of our system. These kinds of problems exist in the southwest sector of the downtown area. The system in the D Street to H Street area is better than the old Water Street North line but not by much since it is vitrified clay pipe for the most part. This pipe does not rust but it is broken and in very sad condition.



The current system, as a whole, is approximately 158 years old and like fine wine has aged well. It has grown to approximately 19,450 known connections, 1,013,736 feet of maintained sewer line, 3,664 manholes, 125 Restaurant grease traps, 8 industrial customers with pretreatment units, 9 pump stations, and the new fully operational water recycling facility. This system has tirelessly and relentlessly worked 24 hours a day 7 days a week, with only limited interruption and has served this community for roughly 57,670 days, rain or shine.

A major component of the annual budget is Operation & Maintenance (O&M), to replace failing infrastructure. Even water laterals installed 30 years ago of materials, now failing, present a daily challenge to O&M crews.

Sewer Lateral Replacement Grant Program (SLRGP)

The Sewer Lateral Replacement Grant Program (SLRGP) provides financial assistance to property owners for evaluating the condition of their (building) sewer laterals and to repair or replace laterals which are cracked, broken and leaking. The goal is to eliminate leaks in or out of the community sewer system.

What is a Sewer Lateral?

The building sewer lateral is the portion of the sewer system, conveying wastewater from the premises of a user to the city sewer main. All sewer laterals are owned by the property owner to and including the connection to the city sewer main.

SLRGP Check List

- Property owner contacts the Department of Water Resources and Conservation (778.4546)
- Property owner completes and submits a SLRGP application to DWR&C
- Property owner schedules CCTV inspection with DWR&C and plumbing contractor
- DWR&C reviews application and CCTV inspection, determines eligibility and responds to applicant
- Property owner applies for encroachment permit at the Department of Public Works (PW) - City Hall, 11 English Street
- Property owner schedules work and inspections with both DWR&C and PW personnel
- Property owner submits paid invoice to DWR&C

Petaluma's Dentists Help Protect Water by Collecting Mercury Amalgam from Old Filings

Mercury is a highly toxic metal that causes water pollution problems at very low concentrations. One of the many ways the City is looking to keep mercury out of the environment is by partnering with the 45 dentists in town to establish a Dental Amalgam Recovery Program. Other municipalities in the Bay Area have achieved a 65% Mercury reduction through cooperation of dentists and the installation of dental amalgam separators at each office. The City of Petaluma is starting our dental program this summer and hopes to see the same reductions in Mercury that the other dental amalgam programs in the Bay Area are observing. The City is working with the dentists in Petaluma to protect our local environment and the San Francisco Bay.

Director's Note:

It has been an honor to serve as DWR&C Interim Director since April 14, 2010. The culture and philosophy of public service in this Department is outstanding. We hold the community's trust proudly to provide a safe and reliable water supply and to treat the effluent from this community in a cost-effective, environmentally responsible manner. The men and women who manage your utility are dedicated to operating and maintaining these systems in a safe, reliable, and professional manner for the nearly 19,500 accounts we serve. We look forward to continuing to meet your utility needs and to expand our service and connections to citizens through our outreach programs. -- Pamela Tuft