



Winter 2012

The Waterworks

A Publication of the Petaluma Department of Water Resources & Conservation

Pharmaceutical Collection Events and Installation of Collection Containers

Pharmaceutical take-back programs and events are collection methods aimed at reducing the quantity of unused pharmaceuticals entering the waste stream. In 2011, the Department of Water Resources and Conservation participated in two Safe Medicine Collection Events this year coordinated through the intermunicipal Safe Medicine Disposal Program.

The first event was held at the Petaluma Senior Center on April 29 and the second was held at the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility on September 21. Both events had an excellent turnout demonstrating a strong local demand for this program in Petaluma. Approximately 65-70 residents came to the first event and disposed of 114 lbs of unwanted medication. At the second event, approximately 40 residents disposed of 91 lbs of medicine. A total of 205 lbs of medication were dropped off at these events.



'C' Street Pump Station Upgrade Construction Nears Completion

The Capital Projects Section is putting the finishing touches on the \$2.5 million 'C' St. Pump Station Upgrade along with Pacific Infrastructure Corporation as the general contractor, and The Covello Group as the construction manager. This station is critical to the operation of the Southwest section of the City's sewer system, pumping all the sewage under the river to a collection manhole on the opposite bank. Central to the project was the updating of the pumps, pumping controls, and electrical system, thus reducing its power consumption by a third and increasing the pumping capacity to over eleven (11) million gallons of wastewater a day.



We are excited to welcome this much needed capital upgrade and are looking forward to many more years of strong 24/7 service from this pump station.

The Department has invested in the fabrication of two stationary collection containers (green container shown in the photo). The collection container is metal, double locking, and functions much like a mail box by allowing items to be deposited but prohibiting items from being removed. City staff are currently working toward obtaining authorization to install the containers at two facilities to provide a convenient year round disposal option for Petaluma residents. Additional information on drop-off locations and items that can be accepted can be found at www.safemedicinedisposal.org.

Why Do I Pay More When I Conserve Water?

It is true that water conservation leads to increased water rates. The more we save, less revenue is generated to support the operations of our system, resulting in a higher cost per unit of water. While it is true that our successful conservation efforts have caused a decrease in revenue which does have a direct relation to water rates, the alternative to conservation is developing new infrastructure such as reservoirs, pipelines and pump stations to meet higher demands. This would cost rate payers millions of dollars and would cause water rates to increase at a much faster pace than those caused by current conservation.

There are four sources of water that the City of Petaluma draws upon for its water customers: Surface water (Russian River water purchased from the Sonoma County Water Agency, SCWA), Groundwater (water stored in underground aquifers), Recycled water (surface and groundwater that gets used, treated at the Ellis Creek Recycling Facility and reused), and Water Conservation. Water conserved is actually viewed as a source of water and it is currently the cheapest source of water. Conservation also helps keep pumping costs down (less energy needed due to less water being pumped) which helps to offset the ongoing cost of maintaining and operating the current infrastructure.

Imagine a scenario where Water Conservation programs did not exist and there was little or no conscious effort to conserve water. SCWA would be obligated to expand the current water system, build reservoirs, construct storage tanks and pump stations and install thousands of miles of pipelines to meet higher demands. This would translate into SCWA charging the City of Petaluma substantially more per acre foot of water each month which would have a direct relation to our water rates. Currently the City of Petaluma pays \$634.12 per acre foot (one acre foot equals 325,851 gallons). Without your successful water conservation efforts, this number would drastically increase. Not only is water conservation the right thing to do, it's the economical thing to do!

So, while conservation efforts do contribute to some portion of our rate increases, it is still the cheapest alternative to developing additional resources for the City.

Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility

We are pleased to inform you the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility handled the second year without a single unauthorized discharge incident, and without a single water quality effluent violation. The facility was able to treat all the demands placed upon the it, including increased influent flows during the spring, discharging only fully treated effluent to the Petaluma River. In the first six months of the year the facility treated 1.2 billion gallons of raw sewage, and produced 214 million gallons of recycled water. The late spring rains reduced the recycled water demand during May and June, however, the demand returned to normal in July.

Since the facility was brought on-line in January 2009, preventative maintenance has been a priority. Although the facility is considered new, there is equipment which has already logged over 21,000 hours of run time. This is the equivalent of driving a car 735,000 miles, averaging 35 mph.

Keeping equipment operable in the highly corrosive environment found in wastewater treatment plants is always challenging. We use a computer-based asset management program to schedule preventative maintenance tasks, and document repairs on over 1,000 assets. Our emphasis on maintenance will allow the treatment plant to maintain high performance standards, such as regularly reporting conventional pollutant removal rates of greater than 98%.

Monthly Billing in Place - January 2012

This means is that your water usage will be read monthly instead of every two months.