

District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority



Mission

GOALS



VISION

Board of Directors'

STRATEGIC PLAN

Serving the Public • Protecting the Environment

January 10, 2002



Strategic Plan

District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority

Board of Directors

Executive Summary

The Board of Directors of the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (WASA) has developed a second strategic plan to guide WASA over the next three years in achieving the Authority's mission of providing quality water services and protecting the environment. The Authority's opportunities and future challenges have been identified as the Board moves towards an ever more proactive approach to addressing WASA's customer relations, operational, financial, environmental, safety and security issues.

This plan builds on the implementation achievements of the first Strategic Plan prepared by the WASA Board in 1998. At that time, WASA identified a clear set of goals and articulated its vision, mission and values.

Much has been accomplished since WASA's 1996 inception; however, much remains to be done. When WASA was created, the organization was in fiscal distress and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had initiated administrative enforcement actions to force changes in plant maintenance and operations. Today, WASA is fiscally sound and in compliance with all regulatory orders, but new challenges have emerged. For example, the September 11th terrorist attacks have dramatically reinforced our attention to the issue of protecting our facilities and distribution systems and educating and reassuring our customers on these important matters. How well we meet our challenges will depend on how well we effectively meet our customers' expectations, as well as how well we continue to carry out our mission, which includes safeguarding the environment.

This plan is designed to provide direction for the development and refinement of specific programs to:

- Distribute safe, clean drinking water
- Promote responsive, timely and efficient customer service,
- Insure a safe, secure working environment,
- Protect the environment,
- Assure fiscal stability and accountability,
- Encourage better internal and external communications, and
- Measure results and insure accountability.



The goals addressed in this strategic plan include the following:

- **Customers First**
WASA will provide superior, equitable and responsive customer service to the diverse communities of its customer base.
- **Performance and quality water**
WASA will operate safe and efficient water distribution and wastewater collection and treatment facilities in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- **Biosolids management**
WASA will develop and implement a state-of-the-art biosolids management program that is cost-effective, meets long-term needs and responds to applicable regulatory requirements.
- **Financial stability and minimum rate increases**
WASA will maintain a sound financial position that supports legislative mandates while maintaining cost-effective retail rates for its ratepayers.
- **Environmental stewardship**
WASA will provide excellent environmental stewardship based on good science and prudent financial management.
- **Health, safety and security**
WASA will operate the Authority's facilities in a manner that protects the health, security and safety of employees and the surrounding residential communities.
- **Productive and effective management**
WASA will foster an organizational culture that ensures a well-trained, highly skilled work force, encourages hard work, professionalism, creativity, productive communications, and promotes the highest ethical standards and conduct for all employees, and managers.
- **Effective internal and external communications**
WASA will effectively communicate with employees, customers, stakeholders, and government agencies to establish and maintain productive, two-way communication.



- **The WASA Board of Directors**
The WASA Board will combine the best practices of corporate boards and public bodies, and will earn a reputation as one of the most effective and prestigious governing bodies in the metropolitan area.

WASA's Vision

WASA will be an independent, world-class environmentally sensitive provider of a high quality, reliable and reasonably priced drinking water distribution system, and wastewater collection and treatment systems. This vision will be accomplished through emulation, where appropriate, of best practices of the public and private sectors, the application of state-of-the-art technology, adherence to cost-efficient principles of private business, and the hard work of a well-trained, enthusiastic and proud work force.

WASA's Mission

WASA's mission is to operate and maintain reliable and cost effective water distribution and wastewater collection and treatment systems while providing consistently superior customer service. Additionally, we will meet or surpass all applicable regulatory mandates while protecting the public's health and promoting excellent environmental stewardship.

WASA's Values

WASA's values are to be:

- Respectful, responsive, equitable and sensitive in our treatment of our customers' needs
- Respectful, responsive, equitable and sensitive in our treatment of our employees
- Dedicated to teamwork, mutual cooperation and appreciation
- Always mindful of health and safety
- Efficient, professional, and equitable in delivery of our mandated, legislative services
- Worthy of our customers' trust
- Always ethical in our personal behavior and professional conduct.



The Board of Directors' Strategic Plan

The Board's Strategic Plan identifies specific goals and related objectives for WASA to achieve over the next three years. The categories covered in the plan include: customer service enhancements; operational excellence; quality management, both fiscal and personnel; environmental stewardship; safety and security measures; and board governance.

This document is intended to be a living, dynamic plan. The Board will monitor the Authority's progress in achieving the Plan's goals and objectives. The various committees of the Board will review, evaluate and direct WASA's progress with input provided by the senior management team. The Plan will be updated as is necessary. The Board, as part of its fiduciary and statutory responsibilities, will adopt annual budgets for operations and capital improvements that is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan.

The guiding principles for the Plan and the Board's actions will be objectivity, honesty, integrity, efficiency and quality in keeping with the values of the Authority.



Goal 1: Customers First

WASA will provide superior, equitable and responsive customer service to the diverse communities of its customer base.

Rationale: Customers are the very reason for WASA's existence. WASA values its customers and strives to provide them with superior, equitable, and responsive service. Since our customer base includes diverse residential, commercial and government communities with different needs, a variety of techniques will be used to achieve this goal. Among our objectives is our commitment to improve billing and meter reading and more effectively communicating with the public on repairs and service disruptions.

Objectives:

- Earn a reputation for world-class customer service by ensuring that customer focus becomes a critical component of WASA's planning, operations and training.
- Improve the quality and timeliness of responses to our customers and bring them up to, and maintain them at industry standards or better. Implement the Customer Information System and routinely review its effectiveness.
- Implement the automated meter reading system, replacing all water meters to provide customers with more accurate, timely, and consistent readings and billings.
- Develop and implement a repairs and service disruption notification system to inform affected persons and the public generally about such matters.
- Continue to provide employee and managerial training on customer service/relations techniques and best practices on an ongoing basis and to incorporate customer service principles into performance standards and evaluations.



Goal 2: Technical Performance and Quality Water

WASA will operate safe and efficient water distribution and wastewater collection and treatment facilities in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Rationale: WASA is responsive to both regulators and customers. Compliance with applicable regulations supports the WASA philosophy of promoting environmental stewardship while striving to minimize retail rate increases. Full compliance will set a positive example for other public and private sector entities and will avoid adverse regulatory actions, including fines and/or other penalties.

Objectives:

- Develop and obtain approval of a Combined Sewer Overflow Long Term Control Plan and to implement CSO controls in reasonable stages in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements and strategies set forth under Goal 5.
- Facilitate compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.
- Implement all provisions of the Blue Plains Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) regarding the allocation capacity to WSSC and Fairfax County and operating and capital costs.
- Evaluate the condition of the sanitary combined and storm sewer systems to improve operating efficiency.
- Evaluate the performance of the water delivery system to improve operating efficiency.
- Seek relief from EPA from Administrative Order III-96-001-DS upon completion of all consent decree requirements and maintain full regulatory compliance.
- Continue to annually review the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan.
- Review contractors' performance and assess WASA's need for services annually.
- Become a sophisticated industry leader in the use of computers and information technology to better communicate with customers, to improve services and performance and to reduce costs.
- Implement continuous Internal Improvement Plan.



Goal 2: Technical Performance and Quality Water (cont)

- Develop and use low impact development and other best management practices at all WASA facilities.
- Establish a strong, effective relationship with other District Government agencies to develop and implement the MS4 plans.



Goal 3: Biosolids Management

WASA will develop and implement a state-of-the-art biosolids management program that is cost-effective, meets long-term needs and responds to applicable regulatory requirements.

Rationale: As part of its major capital improvement plan, WASA will research and introduce new technology to manage biosolids. The solids processing facilities are designed to produce a product that can either be reused or disposed of appropriately, meeting all applicable environmental regulations.

Objectives:

- Effectively implement the necessary steps, including community involvement, to construct the egg-shaped digesters.
- Prepare and implement a communication plan/strategy for public acceptance of the biosolids program.
- Develop a contingency plan for biosolids management that will be responsive to changes in EPA's and the locally regulated biosolids' disposal program.



Goal 4: Financial Stability and Rate Increases

WASA will maintain a sound financial position that supports legislative mandates while maintaining cost-effective rates for its ratepayers.

Rationale: WASA strives to manage the Authority while maintaining a sound financial position. This enables the Authority to have excellent credit ratings that directly result in lower interest costs for the Authority and therefore lower rate increases. A sound financial condition enables the Authority to fulfill its mission to deliver quality water services, improve aging facilities, and comply with regulations in a fiscally prudent manner.

Objectives:

- Manage the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to keep within schedule and budget and regularly review for compliance with these goals.
- Investigate other available revenue opportunities utilizing sewers and other assets.
- Annually review the 10-year financial plan to assess its applicability to current issues, paying particular attention to the effect of environmental mandates and the CSO program on the budget and customer rates.
- Review WASA's rate structure to insure their fair and equitable application on all ratepayers.
- Maintain A category bond ratings
- Review the entire retail rate structure and reform it as is necessary.
- Seek non-ratepayer funding contributions to the CSO program.



Goal 5: Environmental Stewardship

WASA will provide excellent environmental stewardship based on good science and prudent financial management.

Rationale: WASA will continue to be a leader in the protection of the environment as demonstrated by its use of innovative wastewater treatment strategies such as nutrient removal. WASA has a critical, but by no means exclusive role in enhancing the quality of our regional waterways. In that role, WASA will continue to work with government agencies, the private sector and the environmental community to further improve the quality of the environment that it impacts.

Objectives:

- Meet, or surpass where cost effective, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit limits.
- Work with other river dischargers to collectively meet, or surpass where cost effective, appropriate water quality standards.
- Contribute to the development of reasonable, scientifically based Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) standards.
- Partner where practicable with other entities to establish a watershed based approach to water quality.
- Meet or surpass where cost effective, short-term and long-term requirements to control Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) including CSOs onto city streets as well as into waterways.



Goal 6: Health, Safety and Security

WASA will operate the Authority's facilities in a manner that protects the health, security and safety of employees and the surrounding residential communities.

Rationale: WASA exists to protect and serve. Safety is the shared responsibility of the WASA Board, management, and employees. All WASA operations must be consistently safe for employees and the community. WASA will be vigilant in protecting and securing its facilities and water quality and will use all necessary and reasonable means at its disposal to do so.

Safety Objectives:

- Maintain safe and secure operations to consistently provide safe working conditions for the public, employees, contractors, and service providers.
- Minimize health, safety and security risks to the community.
- Expedite implementation of the Capital Improvement Plan projects that will reduce health and safety risks.
- Implement an effective safe driving program to insure the safety and welfare of employees and the public.
- Implement a strong drug-testing program that stresses education, treatment and prevention.
- Maintain and continually upgrade an effective disaster recovery plan addressing crises affecting fresh water distribution, the Blue Plains wastewater plant and other WASA facilities.

Security Objectives:

- Continuously monitor operations for any disruptive or terrorist activity and use all appropriate measures to insure the security of operations and facilities.
- Develop and implement a program to conduct thorough background checks of employees and contractors in sensitive positions and roles.
- Minimize, to the extent possible, the use of hazardous materials on all work sites, thereby decreasing the potential for use of those materials for destructive purposes for WASA and the surrounding communities.



Goal 7: Productive Work Force and Effective Management

WASA will foster an organizational culture that ensures a well-trained, highly skilled work force, encourages hard work, professionalism, creativity, and productive communications, and promotes the highest ethical standards and conduct for all employees and managers.

Rationale: WASA values its employees and considers them its most important asset. WASA will contribute to their professional growth and development by investing in training, providing proper resources to conduct work and implementing employee evaluation programs that reward performance, stress training, foster productive and mutual communication between management and the workforce. WASA also strongly encourages diversity throughout all levels of the workplace and expects the same of contractors and all doing business with WASA.

Objectives:

- Provide a work environment that supports the health, safety and well being of employees.
- Maintain a continuous two-way dialogue between managers and employees about issues and challenges seeking constructive feedback and communication.
- Ambitiously promote and invest in the professional growth and development of employees at every level through a comprehensive, regularly evaluated training, skills development program.
- Implement a gain-sharing program.
- Annually review and assess the performance evaluation, gain-sharing and training programs.
- To meet present and emerging challenges and opportunities, WASA will hire, promote and reward highly trained, qualified and skilled personnel.
- Establish a close working relationship with the unions to promote a culture consistent with WASA's mission.
- Adopt leading edge information technologies and continuous operational improvements to reduce costs while providing the necessary training to employees.
- Continuously evaluate the use of contractors and consultants to supplement the workforce while insuring operational efficiency and maintaining critical institutional knowledge.



Goal 8: Effective Internal and External Communications

WASA will communicate with employees, customers, stakeholders, and government agencies to establish and maintain productive, two-way communication.

Rationale: WASA provides information to a wide spectrum of the public and benefits from listening to individuals and groups as plans for improved service are implemented. Effective internal and external communications are critical to the success of WASA's programs to provide quality services to the Authority's diverse customer base.

Objectives:

- In fulfilling our goal for world-class customer service, develop and implement a vigorous, ambitious and aggressive communications plan to educate and inform the public about WASA and to promote a constructive dialogue, both to improve our service level and to afford the public a better understanding of WASA's overall operations to include its capital improvements and finances.
- Improve external communications with the many diverse publics through multi-language materials and targeted meetings.
- Increase outreach through enhanced use of the website, expanded media relations, more customer communications.
- Improve internal communications with employees to keep them informed about operations and achievements.
- Inform government agencies at every level and in all relevant surrounding jurisdictions of WASA operations, plans and programs and establish effective working relationships with them.
- Monitor and review proposed regulatory and legislative actions affecting WASA.
- Be a good corporate citizen through collaboration and community outreach and action.
- Develop and practice a "crisis communications" plan.



Goal 9: The WASA Board of Directors

The WASA Board will combine the best practices of corporate boards and public bodies, and will earn a reputation as one of the most effective and prestigious governing bodies in the metropolitan region.

Rationale: WASA has statutory duties that include: adopting budgets, establishing procurement and personnel systems, hiring the General Manager, setting rates (DC only), adopting published regulations, and providing policy guidance on general operations. As members of the Board of Directors, members will adhere to the following objectives in carrying out this role.

Objectives:

- Directors will discharge their duties with the highest standards of ethics, care, loyalty, confidentiality and fairness and in strict compliance with all applicable law.
- Directors will play an active role in Committees of the Board and in deliberations of the whole Board, which presumes full familiarity with Board materials and an excellent attendance record.
- While recognizing the right of individuals to hold and express in appropriate circumstances their personal opinions, the WASA Board will at all times respect the need for the Authority to speak with one voice on policy and important operational issues, whether through the Chairman or the General Manager or his designees.
- Directors will collectively develop policies and provide guidance to the Authority and discharge their legal duties, but should recognize they are not charged with the management or operations of the Authority, which are the responsibility of the General Manager.