WHAT'S ON TAP?

dc water is life

NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS | VOL. 13 ISSUE 2

General Manager's Message: Front Page News

Dear Customers,

Happy New Year! You may have seen the recent *Washington Post* article, "Billions needed to upgrade America's leaky water infrastructure" on the front page. Reporter Ashley Halsey used a recent, complicated sewer repair in Adams Morgan to illustrate the challenges DC Water and other utilities face in maintaining aging systems.

This media attention is welcome and overdue. As one of my colleagues recently told a United States Senate committee, water and sewer infrastructure are underfunded by more than $600 billion nationwide. This is how much it would cost to keep pipes from breaking and to ensure quality service in the years to come.

The online version of the *Post* story drew hundreds of comments, many posing the legitimate policy question of how large a role the federal government should play in infrastructure funding. A number of commenters suggested the cities, or the end users, should pay the bill for needed upgrades.

I disagree. The federal government installed water and sewer systems in many cities, not just the District, and for years invested large sums in their upkeep. The infrastructure we maintain and operate is every bit as important as the roads, rails and bridges that are included in federal appropriations every year and were a major part of the recent stimulus package.

Roads, rails and bridges matter because they provide jobs and support society. Yet we can have no jobs – or society – without reliable, reasonably priced clean water. In an era of deficit spending and continued military involvement overseas, it's easy to argue that we can't afford to spend more on pipes. But I would argue that we can't afford not to do so.

With increased federal spending on water infrastructure, we have the chance to ensure clean water for the next generations and put people to work today. Now is the time.

George S. Hawkins
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National State of Water Infrastructure

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) in December released a report on the state of the nation's water and sewer infrastructure. The ASCE regularly evaluates infrastructure in each industry—transportation, water and sewer, bridges, dams, and more.

This water report looked at the economic impact of underinvestment, meaning what will it cost the nation in terms of lost business sales, loss in gross domestic product, job losses and water-borne illnesses if we don't step up to replace aging water and sewer systems. According to the authors, the U.S. could suffer more than $700 billion in losses by 2020 and ten times that amount by 2040 if we don't act more quickly.

The authors also analyzed the water infrastructure needs in the U.S. compared with current and projected spending to identify the funding gap. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sees the need at $126 billion in 2020, while roughly $42 billion will get funded, leaving a gap of $84 billion in repairs and projects that won't be addressed. This gap only widens over time.

Here in the District, DC Water has been paying attention. Two years ago, the Authority's Board decided to

see **NATIONAL STATE OF WATER INFRASTRUCTURE** *continued on back*

Did You Know?

Did you know DC Water offers automatic bill payment through Electronic Funds Transfer, which automatically deducts money from your checking or savings account? You still receive an itemized statement, but you don't have to write checks. Instead, the bank sends the funds for you and you can rest assured that your payment will be on time.

You may sign up for this option at *dcwater.com* on My DC Water under the "Pay my bill" option. Or you can set up recurring credit card payments in a similar fashion.

National State of Water Infrastructure *continued*

accelerate the pace of water main replacements, from .033 percent per year to 1 percent – or 11 miles—per year. This is twice the national average and three times what the Authority had been replacing. DC Water is ramping up to this schedule by 2015.

The rate of deterioration in sewer lines is not as predictable and some can last much longer than water mains since many are not pressurized. DC Water's sewers are inspected on a set schedule and any problems are identified and fixed. For local sewers, the Authority plans to inspect about 70 miles (or 4 percent of the system) each year, and rehabilitate as many as 15 miles (almost 1 percent), depending on the inspection results.

To aid in firefighting, DC Water developed GIS technology that is delivered to laptop computers in the fire trucks to give firefighters instant access to information about each of the 9,100+ hydrants in the District—their status, when they were last inspected, and how much fire flow to expect from each.

These capital programs, as well as huge environmental projects required by the U.S. EPA, come with significant costs that are currently borne mostly by ratepayers. Each year when the Board of Directors evaluates water and sewer rates, there is robust discussion about needs versus ratepayer burden. It is a necessary conversation and a delicate balance. But if we don't invest now, we will certainly pay later.

Spring Cleaning the District's Water Pipes

From March 26 through May 7, 2012, the disinfectant used for drinking water treatment will temporarily switch from chloramine (chlorine + ammonia) to chlorine. During this time, you may notice a slight change in the taste and smell of your drinking water. This standard switch in disinfection is part of an annual program to spring clean water pipes and maintain water quality throughout the year.

If you notice an increased chlorine odor:

- Flush the cold water tap for two minutes.
- Refrigerate a pitcher of cold tap water to allow the chlorine odor to disappear.
- Use a pitcher-style or faucet mount filter to remove chlorine taste and odor.

Individuals and business owners who take special precautions to remove chloramine from tap water, such as dialysis centers, medical facilities and aquatic pet owners, should continue to take the same precautions during the temporary switch to chlorine. Most methods for removing chloramine from tap water are effective in removing chlorine.

The Washington Aqueduct is the organization responsible for treating drinking water in the District. Water is routinely monitored throughout the city to ensure chlorine levels meet safe target levels. To view monthly chlorine levels, visit *dcwater.com/testresults*. For more info, contact the Drinking Water Division at (202) 612-3440.

DC Water Permit Operations Moves to Convenient Location in SW

Now offering fast track service. Some new fees in effect.

Anyone performing construction that will affect, either directly or indirectly, the public water or sewer systems must first obtain approval from DC Water and get permits from the Department of Consumer Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), and the District Department of the Environment (DDOE).

The DC Water Department of Permit Operations is the starting point for most of DC Water's permit services. This office can provide mapping of the existing water and sewer infrastructure and can answer many general questions.

The DC Water Department of Permit Operations recently moved from Blue Plains to be conveniently co-located with DCRA, DDOT and DDOE. The new address is 1100 4th Street SW, 3rd floor, Washington, DC 20024.

All permit applications, reviews, fee assessments, fee payments and questions will be handled at this new office. The option of an expedited or "fast track" review for a fee has been added and staff will pre-screen permit submissions at intake to determine completeness and the amount of review fees. Fees will now be collected at the time of submission.

The new phone number for the Department of Permit Operations is (202) 646-8600. Please check *dcwater.com/permits* for updated contact information, staff extensions, and submission requirements and fees.

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY
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