

APRIL-JUNE 2004

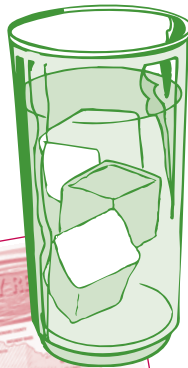
Pipeline

WASHINGTON SUBURBAN SANITARY COMMISSION

www.wsscwater.com

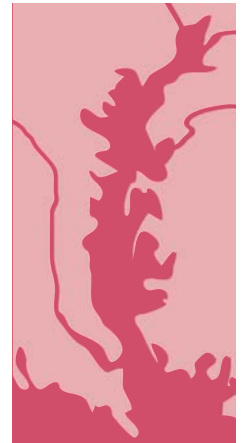
Learning About Your Water

In June, we will be distributing our Annual Water Quality Report right to your door through *The Washington Post* and direct mail packages. In 2003, as always, the water we produced and delivered to your home or business met or did better than all state and federal guidelines for drinking water. If you are a *Post* subscriber, WSSC's Water Quality Report will arrive as an insert with the Sunday, June 20th issue. If you do not subscribe, you will receive the report as part of a direct mail package in your mailbox on Friday, June 18th. If you have any questions after reading the report, or would like additional copies, please contact the Public Communications Office at 301-206-8100 or e-mail us at: communications@wsscwater.com.



WSSC Helps Save The Bay

Spreading the news on how wastewater treatment plants can improve water quality, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) has recognized WSSC for significantly reducing nitrogen levels entering the Bay through the use of an innovative process at its Piscataway facility in southern Prince George's County. Excessive nitrogen can degrade water quality and harm aquatic life.



In a recent issue of its "Save the Bay" member newsletter, CBF showcases WSSC's Piscataway Wastewater Treatment Plant and commends the utility for using an advanced biological nutrient removal process to substantially reduce nitrogen levels. The CBF article states: "All of us who love the Chesapeake owe a debt of gratitude to [WSSC employee] Sam Amad and his colleagues who develop innovative, effective wastewater treatment processes to improve the health of our waters." The process, known as a step-feed system, was introduced at the 30 million-gallon-per-day (mgd) facility in 2000. For 2003, total nitrogen levels at the plant averaged 3 milligrams per liter, with a low of 1.1 milligrams per liter.

Ensuring Drinking Water Quality

As required by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), WSSC tested 50 homes throughout our service area for lead in 2002 and found no sites exceeding the 15 parts per billion (ppb) Action Level. Because we meet EPA regulations, we have been allowed to reduce our sampling frequency and the next required sampling is scheduled for late 2004 / early 2005. However, considering recent events and news reports in this region, WSSC understands and respects the heightened awareness among our customers regarding lead. As an agency dedicated to public health, WSSC began an expanded approach to lead sampling last month beyond EPA requirements. While not required to do so, we believe increasing the number and frequency of lead tests will provide more useful, and perhaps reassuring, information

to our customers. We will share our sample results when tests are complete. It's important to note that a potential source of lead for some residents may be lead-based solder used in joining copper pipes and from brass plumbing fixtures in home plumbing. For this reason, EPA requires WSSC to test homes built primarily between 1983 and 1986 with in-home copper pipes. Home copper pipes installed prior to 1983 likely had enough time to develop a mineral coating protecting the pipes from lead leaching into the home water supply. WSSC banned lead-based solder in April 1986. For more information, log on to our website: www.wsscwater.com and click on Public Information. If you have specific water quality questions, or would like our lab to test your water for a fee, please call our Consolidated Laboratory at (301) 206-7575.



Dig It! Before You Dig...

With the weather turning warmer, your attention may be turning toward landscaping or building on your property. Before you start any outside work that involves digging, however, make sure it's safe—and make sure anyone working for you takes the same precaution. If you puncture an underground utility line, you risk possible injury or death. If you fail to call and damages occur, you may be liable.



Make certain that, 48 HOURS BEFORE ANY EXCAVATION OR DIGGING, you call Miss Utility at 1-800-257-7777. Someone will come out and mark or flag all utility lines so you know where they are before you dig. The call and service are free to homeowners and contractors.

Cease The Grease Tip #4

When disposing of household fats, oils or grease, it is a good idea to pour the liquid into a container with a lid.

Types of containers that may be used are:

- Used coffee cans
- Metal shortening cans
- Polystyrene plastic containers with screw-on lids
- Glass jars with screw on lids
- Approved kitchen grease containers sold in retail hardware stores

Make certain to allow liquid to solidify before disposing of the container in the trash.

Never pour grease down the drain, as this can result in a blockage later!

Water, Use It Wisely

WATER SAVING TIPS

- Choose water-efficient drip irrigation for your trees, shrubs and flowers.
- Use a layer of organic mulch around plants to reduce evaporation, promote plant growth, and reduce weeds.



Summertime is Submeter Time

With spring upon us and summer close behind, outside watering, which is a source of significant water usage, becomes more common. Before you turn on the faucet this summer, you should be aware of the effect outdoor watering has on your bill. A typical garden hose, at normal pressure, can use from 600-1000 gallons an hour. If you love a green lawn or have a pool, you may want to consider a submeter, which measures the amount of water used outside of your home. As this water does not return to us as wastewater, this amount is then subtracted from your sewer charges.

Submeter installation is only cost effective if you use LARGE QUANTITIES of water for outside purposes. Initially, some plumbing modifications are necessary. In addition, there is a one-time fee to defray the cost of the submeter and inspection of the plumbing work. If you are interested in further information on a submeter, please call our Public Communications Office at 301-206-8100.

Using Water Wisely— in Your Garden

Xeriscaping, or water efficient landscaping, was pioneered in the southwest. It is a concept that you can adapt in your garden as a water-saving practice. There are several elements to a successful xeriscape design,



among them: soil improvement, the use of mulches for water retention, low water use plants and appropriate maintenance. If you would like more information on xeriscaping, please contact our Public Communications Office at 301-206-8100 or write to: communications@wsscwater.com and we will send you a brochure.

If you like a beautifully manicured lawn, it is important to remember that watering should be done in the early morning hours, before 9 a.m. Watering in the evening poses the risk of mildew and fungus. One way to reduce the amount of water you use on the lawn is to invest in a soaker hose, which uses 70% less water than a traditional sprinkler.

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