



Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
Sustainable Water Utility Management Award
Section I. Utility Profile

Among the largest water/wastewater utilities in the nation, The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) serves the two Maryland counties that wrap around the northern corner of the District of Columbia. Montgomery and Prince George's counties together span 1,000 square miles with an estimated 1.8 million people.

With an annual budget of \$1.3 billion, WSSC operates and maintains:

- Two water filtration plants, one on the Potomac River, one on the Patuxent River
- Six wastewater treatment plants,
- 5,600 miles of water mains
- 5,400 miles of sewer mains
- Two reservoirs formed by two large dams
- 5,600 acres of watershed.

In addition, WSSC utilizes a substantial portion of the capacity of the Blue Plains Advance Wastewater Treatment Plant, operated by DC Water. This means WSSC also pays about 46% for capital and 42% for operating budgets of Blue Plains.

The Patuxent River provides 30% of the source drinking water for WSSC customers. Two dams create two reservoirs. WSSC owns and maintains 5,600 acres of this watershed and looks for opportunities to acquire new parcels as they become available.

The watershed is an important water resource, but it is also a recreation and educational resource meant to be shared by responsible users. Boaters (non-motorized), birdwatchers, fishermen, hikers, picnickers and equestrians are among those permitted to use the reservoirs and surrounding grounds. WSSC and other environmental groups use the watershed for educational and clean-up activities.

Because WSSC serves two jurisdictions, its authority is derived from State law. The two County Executives each appoint three Commissioners who oversee and govern WSSC. Daily operations are managed by the General Manager/CEO and staff. However, budgetary authority lies with the two counties. The budget process takes about a year but simply stated; WSSC consults with the county officials and then proposes a budget; the councils review and then try to work out any differences; if they concur, then a compromise budget emerges; if they cannot agree, the original budget proposed by WSSC becomes the budget by default.

The story to be told in following pages is that of a utility moving from playing catch-up to innovation. WSSC has taken major steps to rebuild the infrastructure while employing innovative ways to finance it, assist customers in need and save money with innovative energy and procurement programs.

And most important, in 97 years, WSSC has never had a drinking water violation!



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Section II. Sustainability Mission/Policy Statement

Mission of Sustainability

At WSSC, our mission is simple; “We are entrusted by our community to provide safe and reliable water, life’s most precious resource, and return clean water to our environment, all in an ethical, sustainable, and financially responsible manner.”

We are serious about ensuring that future generations have access to the high quality drinking water and quality of life we experience today. Our focus on sustainability is multi-faceted. We believe in sustaining our environment, our infrastructure, our finances, our workforce, and our community.

Strategic Framework

WSSC’s Board of Commissioners established a Strategic Plan in May 2010 and in May 2013 weaved a theme for sustainability throughout our Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Priorities. These elements, combined together with our customer-focused Level of Service Value Statements, comprise a comprehensive strategic management system which guides our governance, policies and day-to-day decision-making.

The Board shaped and defined eight Strategic Priorities (see appendix for complete Strategic Priorities with results statements) that represent our methods for achieving our Mission and Vision and ultimately will lead to improved outcomes for our customers:

- Sustain Infrastructure
- Demonstrate Environmental Stewardship
- Enhance Communications and Stakeholder Relationships
- Integrate Supply Chain Management and Supplier Diversity
- Deliver Excellent Customer Service
- Ensure Safety and Security
- Ensure Financial Sustainability
- Optimize Workforce Management

Utility Performance

WSSC incorporates traditional triple bottom line performance measurement including environmental, economic, and social measures into its utility performance evaluation. Enterprise performance and overall achievement is measured through these strategic priorities and associated performance objectives, measures, and targets. Performance is further evaluated by a set of customer-focused Level of Service Value Statements. The statements represent the Commission’s highest level of commitment to our customers for providing high quality services in a cost-effective manner. The value statements guide our decisions affecting long-term infrastructure investments:

1. Levels of service meet customer and stakeholder expectations;
2. Water and wastewater services are provided at optimal lifecycle and unit costs;
3. WSSC meets or exceeds County, State and Federal regulations and legislation;
4. Water and wastewater services are provided reliably; and
5. Water and wastewater services are provided with minimum environmental impact.

Long-term Commitment to Our Customers

WSSC is passionate about the vital role it plays in the lives of our customers, today and into the future. A key part of our strategy is performing community outreach and soliciting feedback on our day-to-day operations, as well as our long-term plans. WSSC hosts and attends hundreds of community and school events every year, prepares an annual report, and periodically conducts customer surveys and focus groups. We are also aware that recent rate increases are placing a burden on our lower income customers, which is why we are introducing a Customer

Assistance Program to mitigate higher bills, which should help maintain broad-based stakeholder support for revenues needed for future sustainability. We understand our importance to the community, and we are in committed to providing life’s most precious resource today, and for generations to come.





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Section III. Financial Management

Financial stability is one of WSSC's strategic priorities; encompassing the practice of sound financial stewardship to ensure that quality water and wastewater services are available to our customers at a reasonable cost with affordable rates both today and into the future. To that end, WSSC has several ongoing initiatives that encourage ongoing cost awareness in all aspects of our daily decision making. Our financial activities ensure that WSSC continues to review the long-term impacts of our current and planned operating and capital undertakings, including life cycle asset management and revisions to our rate structure and bond issuance practices.

Sound Financial Practices

WSSC maintains a AAA bond rating by all three rating agencies. This is the highest bond rating possible and obtained only by a few of our peer utilities. That rating has annually been affirmed due to prudent fiscal policies and effective management, such as the operating reserve increase, strong coverage ratio targets, debt portfolio management, use of PAYGO financing and implementation of all GASB obligations.

WSSC also continues to effectively manage its debt using a variety of means to ensure that WSSC pays the lowest possible rates. This is done through a combination of short-term variable rate bond anticipation notes, low interest rate loans from the Maryland Water Quality Loan Fund, and long-term debt. WSSC also aggressively looks for refunding opportunities whenever possible. Additionally, WSSC took advantage of the Build America Bonds program on two recent bond issues to receive the lowest interest rates we have seen in many years.

WSSC has successfully increased its working capital reserve from 5% of water and sewer revenues, to 10%, not because of any legal or covenant requirement, but because it is fiscally prudent to do so. This increase further strengthens our ability to accommodate unanticipated expenditures or revenue shortfalls.

Planning Ahead Through Collaboration

Over the last 10 years, the fastest growing portion of WSSC's operating budget has been the debt service payments. Traditionally, WSSC has funded its reconstruction/rehabilitation programs via 20 year debt issuances, which translated into debt service and rate increase requirements. With 11,000 miles of aging underground infrastructure, the reconstruction/rehabilitation needs for underground assets are projected to be over \$2 billion over the next 10 years. The immensity of this requirement will put significant pressure on rates, and WSSC continues to look to the future to identify alternatives to help mitigate the pressure.

In 2011, WSSC formed the Bi-County Infrastructure Funding Working Group to examine options and make recommendations to meet these needs. The Working Group included representatives from the WSSC Commissioners, the General Manager/CEO, the Prince George's and Montgomery County legislative and executive branches, as well as WSSC staff. Through this Working Group, WSSC has begun to issue longer debt (30 years or more versus 20), which greatly reduces the annual debt payment, and the existing fixed fee (Ready-To-Serve Charge, also known as Account Maintenance Fee) has been recalibrated and includes a new infrastructure component which increases the fixed portion of WSSC revenues from a little over 3% to 7.5%. This change will help to increase the reliability and predictability of funding through a dedicated and transparent source.



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The Working Group recommended the creation of a more aggressive Customer Assistance Program (CAP) to target economically disadvantaged customers and provide financial assistance with the water and sewer bills. This new CAP has been approved by the Maryland State General Assembly and will be implemented beginning July 1, 2015 providing assistance for customers currently qualifying for and receiving federal assistance from other State energy programs.

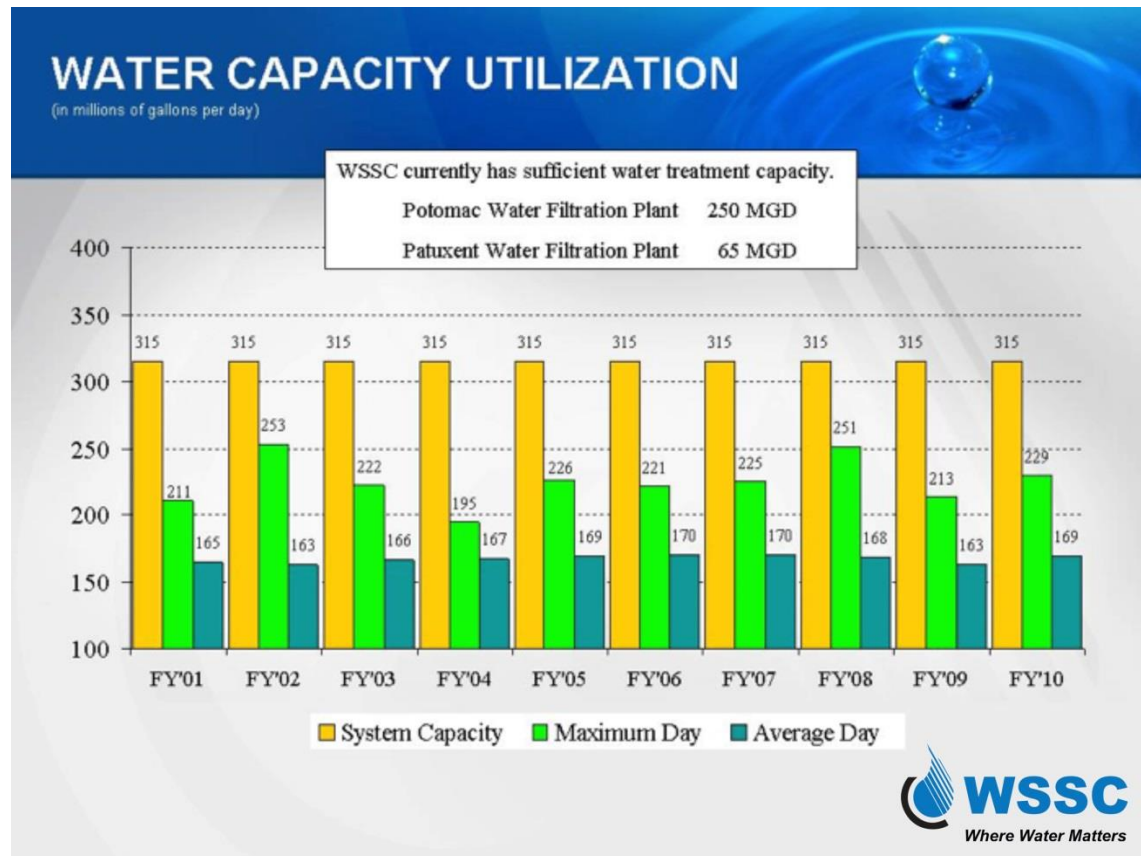
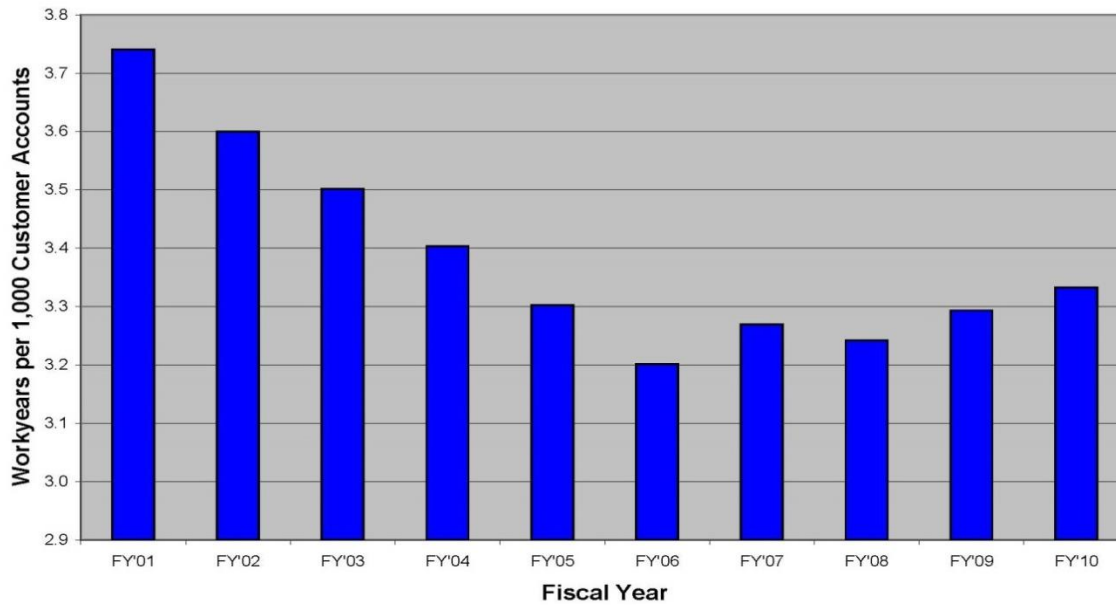
Finally, WSSC, in cooperation with the Montgomery County and Prince George's County governments, continues to participate in an annual spending affordability process. The spending affordability process focuses debate, analysis and evaluation on balancing affordability considerations against providing the resources necessary to serve existing customers (including infrastructure replacement/rehabilitation), meet environmental mandates, and provide the facilities needed for growth. Together with Asset Management Program (see below) and the other prudent, long term fiscal policies and programs employed by WSSC, every effort is made to mitigate rate impacts while ensuring operational and fiscal sustainability.

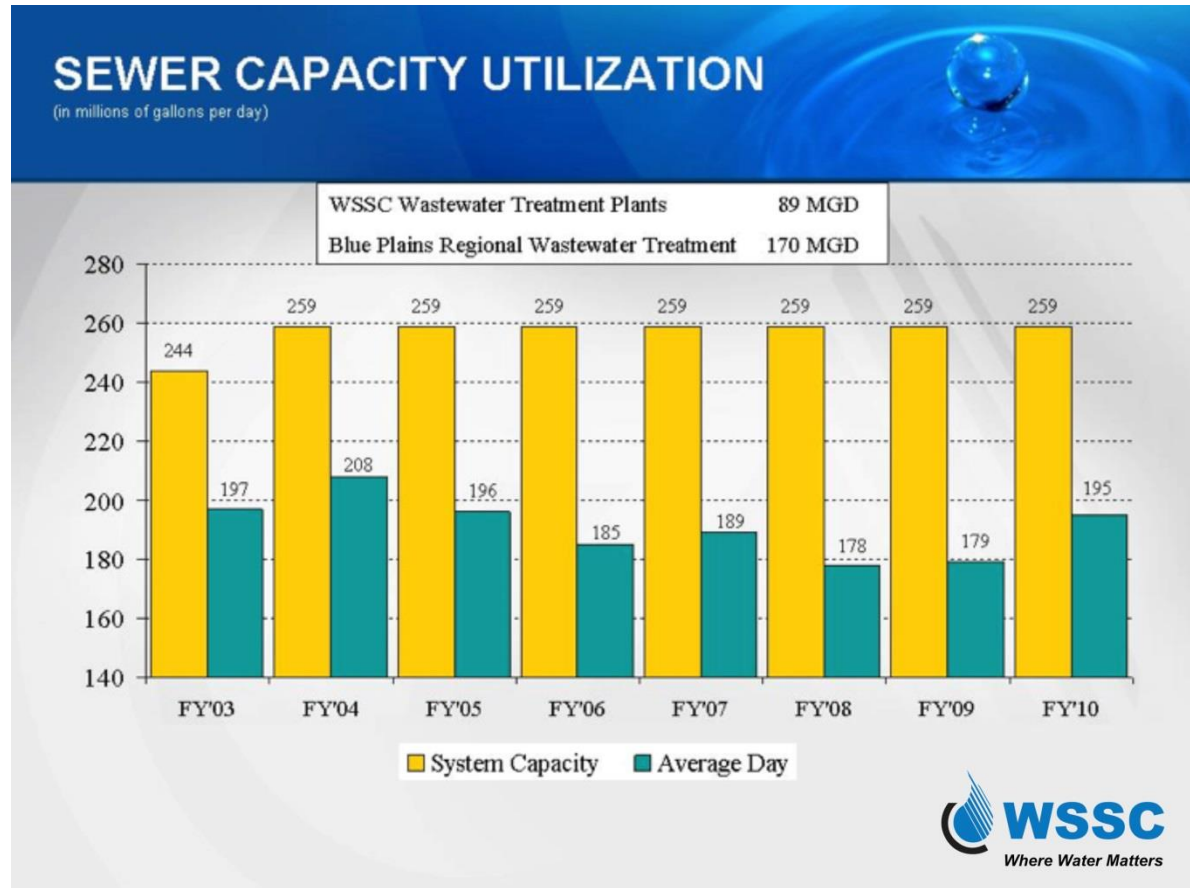
Asset Management

In FY 2007, WSSC began work on an asset management plan to prepare a 30-year capital investment projection based on regulatory requirements, capacity, maintenance, rehabilitation/replacement, process control, energy conservation, and reliability. As with many utilities, WSSC has experienced a number of years of underinvestment and no rate increases, followed by voluminous water main breaks, a federal consent decree, a large, growing capital program and retail rate increases each year since 2006. The Asset Management Program (AMP) applies asset management principles as the basis for future investment decision making and management through focus on the total cost of ownership of the water, wastewater, communications, and buildings and grounds infrastructure. (See Item 10). This program helps to prioritize investment decisions and therefore, moderating the rate increases that may be necessary.

The graphs on the following pages demonstrate WSSC's exemplary financial and operational management by showing that WSSC has sufficient water and sewer plant capacity for the foreseeable future (beyond 2030).

Workyears (Full-Time Equivalents) Per 1,000 Customer Accounts







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WSSC is an environmental organization, so our commitment to protecting the environment is at the heart of our mission. Solar power, wind power, hydropower, and energy-efficient equipment are just a few of the technologies WSSC employs to efficiently use energy during the water and wastewater processes. And we're always looking for innovative, cost-saving ways to manage our water infrastructure and better protect the environment.

Efficient Energy Management and Green Power

Since its formal establishment in 2000 as a unit within WSSC's Production Team, WSSC's Energy Management group has established and exceeded goals for energy conservation, energy supply, and renewable energy. WSSC's initiatives were recognized as a role model for other utilities on a national scale and have been recognized by numerous performance awards received from industry associations and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Since 2002, WSSC has developed and managed \$35 million in energy efficient upgrades, including aeration blowers, fine bubble diffusers, peak shaving engine generators, and variable frequency drives, resulting in \$3 million a year in energy savings. The capital costs of these upgrades have been 100 percent paid for by energy savings.

A new \$20 million energy performance contract (currently in feasibility study phase) is projected to save an additional \$2 million per year in energy costs, which will pay for the capital cost of the project. WSSC has utilized hydro turbines for pumping reservoir raw water to its Patuxent Water Filtration Plant for the last 40 years, saving an estimated \$200,000 per year in electricity costs.

Soaking Up the Sun

In 2012, WSSC unveiled a 4 MW solar PV on-site public/private, purchase power agreement project for solar power at two of its wastewater treatment plants. Combined, the projected savings is \$3.5 million over 20 years or 3,300 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year. The project became operational in October 2013 and inaugurated in the spring of 2014, with 8,500 solar panels at each location soaking up the sun's rays and providing approximately 17% of the power for the plants, the Seneca plant in Germantown and the Western Branch plant in Upper Marlboro. This project incurred no out-of-pocket costs for WSSC. WSSC is exploring the expansion of this program.

In 2008, WSSC obtained a major DOE grant for the feasibility study/conceptual design of the commercial application of anaerobic digestion/combined heat and power technologies at its wastewater treatment plants, resulting in the recommendation of the application at a centrally located WSSC facility. This led to a \$144 million project that was initiated in 2014 and will result in a reduction of 12,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, recovery of 3 MW of green power, and reduced biosolids disposal costs and other related costs of \$1.75 million.

Harnessing the Power of Wind

In 2008, the Commission began using electricity generated by a wind farm in southwestern Pennsylvania



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for approximately 60,000-megawatt hours of power a year. WSSC pays a fixed price for 85 percent of the wind farm's 29.4 MW output over the course of the 10-year arrangement (ending in 2018), supplying approximately 30 per cent of WSSC's energy needs. The resulting reduction in emissions is the equivalent of taking 10,000 cars off the Capital Beltway every year. This smart investment in green energy shows our commitment to protecting the environment.

In fact, WSSC's efforts on energy efficiency and reducing our carbon footprint have been recognized on numerous occasions:

- Rob Taylor, WSSC Energy Manager, Innovative Leadership Award 2014, Environmental Protection Agency
- Rob Taylor, WSSC Energy Manager, Excellence in Public Service Award 2014, Maryland Clean Energy Center (MCEC)
- Renewable Energy Innovator of the Year 2010, Association of Energy Engineers
- Environmental Project of the Year 2005, Association of Energy Engineers
- Corporate Energy Manager of the Year 2004, Association of Energy Engineers

Going Paperless

Over 106,000 people (of our total customer base of 460,000) have signed up for paperless online bill payment. This free service is not only convenient, it reduces the amount of paper used by both WSSC and our customers, and it eliminates postage costs. Our new Customer Connect program allows our field crews to receive and file work orders from an iPad, saving time and hundreds of thousands of sheets of paper while providing more accurate and timely customer service. E-permits and E-documents are other paper saving innovations. We were the first governmental agency in the area to utilize e-docs for review during the construction process.

Watershed Protection

WSSC is the owner of approximately 5,600 acres of land surrounding two reservoirs on the upper Patuxent River that supply drinking water to over 600,000 of our customers. The property is maintained in a forested condition, with limited public recreational access for water supply protection purposes. The existence of such a large protected area within the Patuxent River watershed contributes to significant reductions of sediment and nutrients that could otherwise be carried downstream to the Chesapeake Bay, which has been deemed impaired by these pollutants. In 2013, we completed a yearlong effort to study the watershed protection needs, led by a third party expert, which resulted in a comprehensive watershed management plan.

Land and Easement Acquisitions

Under a condition of a Consent Decree to eliminate sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs), WSSC undertook a successful supplemental environmental project that resulted in the acquisition of 39.66 acres of land, which was added to existing watershed protection holdings. In addition, WSSC purchased 32.81 acres of



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conservation easements on two other private properties threatened by land development. Negotiations are currently in progress to acquire another property of 6.69 acres. Beginning in FY 2016, a program to continue acquisition of conservation easements along currently unprotected streams will be pursued and WSSC intends to provide fencing and reforestation on these riparian areas.

Stream Restoration

Also under the SSO Consent Decree, WSSC has made substantial improvements by stabilizing eroding stream banks in many local streams in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. The program is coordinated with local environmental agencies in support of their stormwater restoration improvements, typically while WSSC is conducting repair work, or during replacement or rehabilitation to the wastewater collection system in stream valleys. Reduction and eventual elimination of SSOs will reduce the amount of pollutants (nutrients) entering local waterways and flowing to the Chesapeake Bay.

Chesapeake Bay Restoration

The challenge of restoring the Bay, by substantially reducing pollutant loads of sediment and nutrients, spans multiple states' jurisdictions. WSSC plays an important part in the Maryland program by reducing nutrient loads coming from point source wastewater effluent. Five of WSSC's six wastewater treatment plants are now, or soon will be, fitted with enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) technology improvements that limit nitrogen to below 3 milligrams per liter (mg/L) and phosphorus to below 0.3 mg/L. The upgraded plants are surpassing their goals and have as little as 2 mg/L nitrogen and <0.1 mg/L phosphorus in the treated effluent. These ENR improvements are responsible for reductions of 300,000 pounds of nitrogen and 20,000 pounds of phosphorus per year from reaching the Chesapeake Bay compared to normalized flow-weighted loads in the year 2010. WSSC's treatment plants are already achieving pollutant reductions that are 65 percent (phosphorus) to 75 percent (nitrogen) less than the 2025 projected target loadings (accounting for growth) estimated by the State of Maryland in its Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan for the Chesapeake Bay.

Climate Change

WSSC won major awards in 2014 for its leadership among water/wastewater utilities in the Climate Change forefront including the prestigious 2014 EPA Climate Leadership Award for Individual Leadership and the 2014 Maryland Clean Energy Center Public Service Award. These awards recognize more than a decade of excellence in climate change adaptation/mitigation.

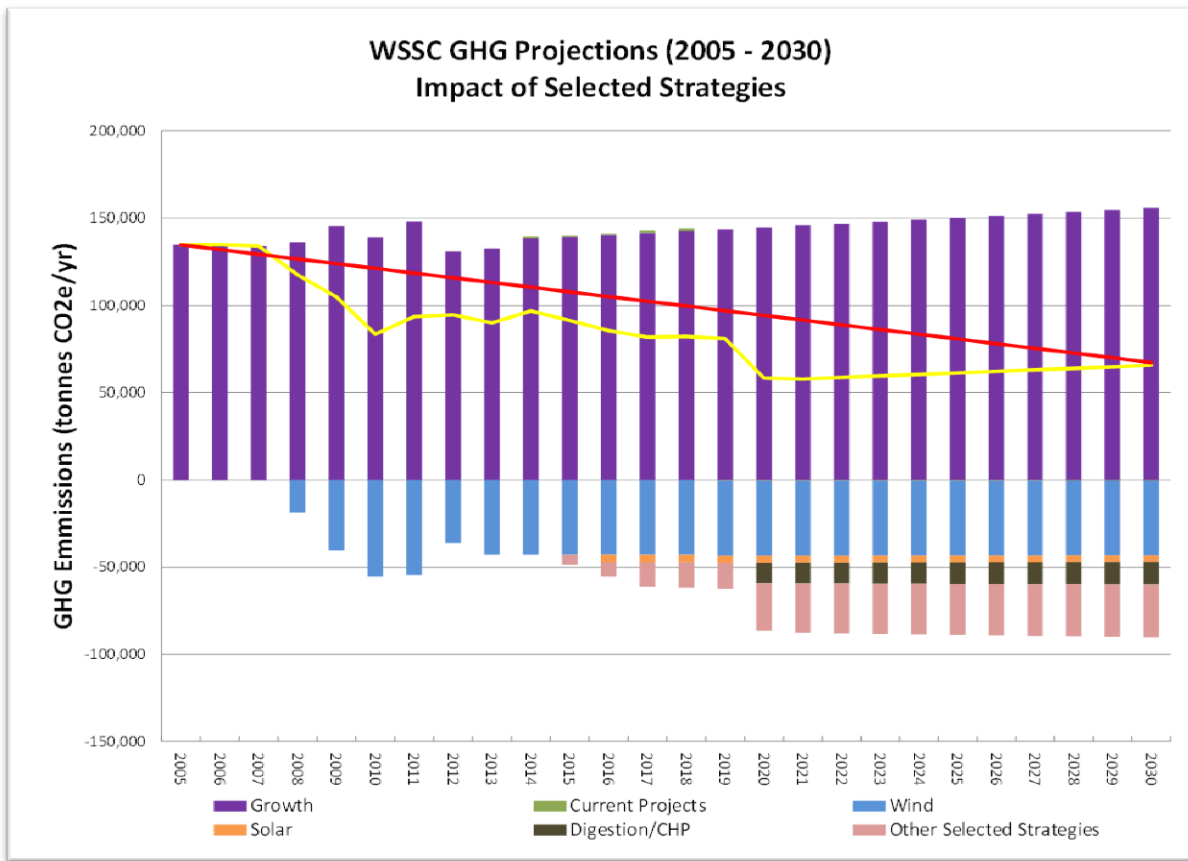
WSSC has been on the forefront of Climate Change Mitigation, developing its first Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory in 2005, and GHG Action Plan in 2011, with updates in 2012, 2013, and 2014. The Commission has identified a series of projects and programs designed to meet its 20 year goal of reducing future GHG emissions by 10% every 5 years (with 2005 as the baseline). The strategies selected, in conjunction with a renewed wind contract, will result in a reduction of 89,800 tons of CO₂e in annual GHG emissions by the year 2030.



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This represents 102 percent of the reduction needed to meet the stated goal of ten percent reduction every 5 years over the 2005 inventory. The largest component of the GHG reduction total is the implementation of a renewed wind contract, which at 42,720 tons CO₂e per year is 49 percent of the total proposed reduction. The Figure below shows the GHG projections with the proposed strategy reductions, and identifies in different categories the impact of the renewed wind contract, solar PV projects and the new Anaerobic Digestion/CHP. All the other strategies combined are shown under the “Other Selected Strategies” category.

In 2015, WSSC will launch a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, Adaptation and Mitigation Planning initiative, a 5 year effort to identify WSSC critical assets vulnerable to climate change events, determine what protective measures should be undertaken to reduce our risks, and reduce our impact (GHG emissions) on Climate Change in accordance with predetermined long range objectives.





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Educating the Public: Fats, Oils and Grease

Beginning in 2005 as part of our Consent Decree, WSSC has undertaken a comprehensive effort to regulate and educate commercial and residential customers to keep Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) out of the systems sewer pipes. WSSC has partnered with the Restaurant Association of Maryland to assist with outreach to restaurants. WSSC has inspected over 55,000 food service establishments since May 2007 to ensure FOG stays out of the pipes.

The residential component of FOG is the “Can the Grease!” public education campaign. The goal is to teach residents of all ages not to throw grease down the drain, as it results in sewer/basement backups. Over the course of the campaign, WSSC has distributed over 45,000 lids to students in classrooms and to residents at community outreach events. Most recently the WSSC outreach team has also trained public schools about FOG so it can be incorporated into the curriculum. WSSC also routinely runs public education campaigns on local television and radio stations to get the “Can the Grease!” message to its customers.

Managing for the Future

WSSC is always mindful of our responsibility to be good environmental stewards. We work to find new ways to conserve natural resources, save energy, shrink our carbon footprint, and educate and involve the public, while delivering safe, clean water to our customer 24/7/365. We continue to seek responsible, thoughtful ways to manage our water use. WSSC has invested in smart technologies to find more efficient, more economical ways to manage our water supply and distribution infrastructure so that we can continue to deliver on our commitment to our customers and the environment. We have become progressive, innovative and forward-thinking.



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WSSC's mission of providing safe and healthy water and disposing of wastewater is by definition social responsibility. We are the first defense against disease. But our commitment goes beyond that to educate, inform and care for our customers in a variety of ways. WSSC is deeply committed to protecting the infrastructure and our ecosystem for generations to come, while balancing financial needs. Having served the community for almost 100 years, WSSC is proud of our long-standing support of the community's social health and economic vibrancy. Our employees are committed to serving our customers, and spend hundreds of hours volunteering in a variety of ways that benefit the communities we serve.

Teaching Future Stewards

Managing the supply and availability of water is one of the most critical natural resource issues facing our nation and the world. WSSC is committed to face this challenge, and recognizes the importance of involving our customers in this effort. WSSC hosts hundreds of outreach events every year to educate the community, especially students, on environmentally friendly practices and behaviors. By cultivating awareness and interest in our youth, we hope to create environmental advocates who live in the community, understand the importance of preserving our precious natural resources, and support our commitment to protect the environment for generations to come.

WSSC employs a dedicated public outreach team to educate the community on water and wastewater issues. In fiscal year 2015, the team facilitated 149 events in the two counties we serve, including career day presentations, science fair judging, environmental education activities, tours of wastewater treatment plants and the reservoir dam, community day tabling, and public school curriculum-approved train-the-teacher or student learning sessions.

Events that engage and educate youth include

- H2O Summit: At this family-friendly event, WSSC teaches 500-600 people, including kids, how to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Children's Water Festival: For nearly a decade, WSSC has hosted this two-day event in May, where 600 fourth grade students participate in hands-on learning activities about water, wetlands, human health, aquatic life, and more.
- Classroom Outreach: WSSC visits, on average, over 80 visits to classrooms to spread the word about the importance of delivering clean water and disposing of wastewater to our communities.
- Environmental Cleanup Days: Throughout the year, WSSC hosts clean up days on its property bordering the Patuxent River.
- Green School Program: Through a partnership with WSSC, students from approximately 20 schools build concrete oyster reef balls on land. Then, the newly formed "reefs" are dropped into the bay, providing a habitat for oysters to flourish and contributing to recovery efforts for the Chesapeake Bay.



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- FOG Curriculum: In 2015, WSSC partnered with PGCPs to implement a FOG curriculum, which teaches 6th grade students about the correlation between pouring grease down the drain and clogging the sewer system. 10,000 “Can the Grease” lids were distributed through this new program.

Public Outreach and Education

During Earth Month WSSC hosts **dozens of cleanups along** the shores of the Patuxent River in WSSC’s watershed. Local residents, community groups, students join WSSC employees in Adopt-a-Road events that engage our corporate neighbors in cleaning up outside our facilities. Maintenance and System Control Staff at our dam and reservoir facilities regularly host tours to educate children and adults about the workings of our source water supply. Employees from our Laboratory Services group facilitate presentations on “Water: Source to Tap,” preventing pollution and waterborne diseases.

WSSC also educates the general public at **community, health and street fairs, festivals and hyper-local events** across the two counties we serve. WSSC volunteers educate our customers on how to prevent leaks, how to conserve water to prevent high bills, how and why to can grease and how to practice water-wise landscaping. We also give away free toilet leak detection tablets and supply “Can the Grease” lids to encourage proper FOG disposal.

Protecting the Health of the Watershed

WSSC’s portion of the 85,000-acre Patuxent reservoirs watershed is approximately 5,600 acres, and includes the two Patuxent reservoirs and parts of the three counties surrounding the reservoirs. The primary reason for creating the two reservoirs was to provide a reliable source of water for the Patuxent Water Filtration Plant, which provides drinking water to more than 600,000 residents of Prince George’s and Montgomery counties, as well as some in Howard County. The WSSC watershed land surrounding the reservoirs was paid for with WSSC ratepayer dollars, not taxpayer dollars to serve as a source water protection buffer.

To maintain the integrity of the buffer, support the health of the river, prevent soil erosion and reduce runoff, WSSC staff consistently monitors conditions and takes steps to preserve and enhance the natural environment. We work with the National Weather Service and Maryland Department of Agriculture to monitor the water and impact of the weather on our water levels and shoreline.

WSSC also works with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the nonprofit Trout Unlimited, to **stock the river with indigenous fish** and ensure that robust populations of native and wild cold-water fish thrive in our river. Trout are often referred to as the “canaries” in the environmental and watershed “coal mine” because they require cold, clean and fast flowing water. This consistent monitoring also provides an opportunity to recognize climate warming-induced stressors through changes in abundance and diversity of cold-water fish in our waterways.



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Community groups contribute to the health of the area by participating in **regular cleanups, plantings, rain barrel workshops and invasive species removal projects** organized by WSSC. As an authorized Student Service Learning (SSL) provider, middle and high school students participate in activities to enhance ecological sustainability. We also work with scouting groups, the Izaak Walton Foundation, the Anacostia Watershed Society, the Rock Creek Conservancy, local Riverkeepers and other groups to organize regular activities along the watershed.

In addition, WSSC works with organizations, such as the American Chestnut Foundation, to **plant native trees** around the watershed. The Commission benefits from their expertise and production as trees grow and create additional pervious surface to prevent excessive runoff and erosion.

To create a permanent connection, WSSC encourages surrounding communities to engage with the watershed to help people appreciate its beauty and versatility, and to foster advocacy of environmental measures. Activities include **picnicking, fishing, bird watching, hiking, boat mooring, recreational boating (sailboats, kayaks, and canoes), managed gun and bow hunting (in specified areas and seasons) and horseback riding.**

Responsive to the Community

WSSC's governance structure is built to involve the elected officials and constituents that reside in our service area. Because WSSC serves two jurisdictions (Prince George's County and Montgomery County), its authority is derived from Maryland state law. The two County Executives each appoint three Commissioners who oversee and govern WSSC. And, while daily operations are managed by the General Manager/CEO and staff, budgetary authority lies with the two counties.

The budget process takes about a year but simply stated; WSSC consults with the county officials and then proposes a budget; the councils review and then try to work out any differences; if they concur, then a compromise budget emerges; if they cannot agree, the original budget proposed by WSSC becomes the budget by default. Importantly, citizens from both counties are able to attend public hearings on both the annual operating budget, as well as the 6-year capital budget. Those meetings are advertised in local papers, as well as via press releases and social media.

Since 1989, the **Customer Advisory Board (CAB)** has augmented communication with our ratepayers. The CAB represents a spectrum of WSSC ratepayers and a variety of customer interests and concerns; providing feedback on how WSSC policies, programs, and services affect ratepayers.

WSSC has a customer-based **Dispute Resolution Board** for customers wishing to appeal high bills. Established in 1992, the Board consists of customers and employees who hear customer issues as they relate to WSSC policy in an attempt to resolve disputes.

The Board of Ethics, established in 2003 assists WSSC in maintaining superior professional and ethical conduct and public confidence in the integrity of the agency. The Board consists of community members appointed by the Commission on the basis of their professionalism, integrity and competence. The



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Board administers the WSSC Code of Ethics, acts on Code-related complaints and periodically reviews the adequacy of the Code.

Finally, the **Customer Advocate** program places four customer service experts throughout the service area. They are equipped to help customers answer questions, solve problems, advise them of upcoming work, and to assist them with issues or questions, such as billing and water main breaks.

Promoting Employee Involvement in the Community

Employees from all parts of the Commission are encouraged to work with the outreach efforts focused on community, classroom, the environment, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and diversity events. They serve as presenters, activity leaders, booth support and hardworking participants in events held during the work week and on weekends. Dozens of volunteers from across the Commission participate in community events on a weekly basis. Participation is encouraged and incentivized through company objective ratings, but not required.

Supporting Education – Programs, Internships and Scholarships

WSSC is committed to creating the next wave of water and wastewater engineers, scientists, analysts, environmentalists and general employees.

In fiscal year 2015 alone, WSSC facilitated 62 “WSSC in the Classroom Events,” including career day presentations and science fair judging. We created a partnership with the MDBio Foundation, a non-profit (501c 3) organization dedicated to providing bioscience awareness, education and workforce development in Maryland and beyond. WSSC employees routinely appear on career panels and speak directly with students at career fair-type setting at STEM-related events.

The **Robert Berger Scholarship** program is completely funded through the donations of WSSC employees and retirees and scholarships are awarded to children of current or former WSSC employees. Formerly known as the WSSC Employee Scholarship Fund, it was renamed the Robert G. Berger Memorial Scholarship Fund to honor the memory of the former WSSC Commissioner. Since its inception in 1996, the fund has awarded over \$145,000 in scholarships to more than 135 students.

WSSC also offers scholarships through the **Commissioners’ Scholarship**, annually awarding up to two new scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each. Winners are eligible for additional awards of \$1,000 each year for up to four consecutive years. In 2014, we awarded two new recipients and provided internships to two former recipients.

In 2015, the WSSC **summer internship program** is supporting its largest group to date, with 60 college interns across 12 departments. Since 2011, eight former interns have become full-time employees of WSSC. We expect this number to grow as the program grows substantially.



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WSSC is also partnering with the **Woodland Job Corps**, a program of the Department of Labor designed to “teach young people the skills they need to become employable and independent.” WSSC has worked with Woodland Job Corps in previous years and currently employs one former Woodland alumnus full time. As this program expands, we expect to hire additional Woodland graduates.

Going beyond our specific mission of water and the environment WSSC established a mentoring program for young people during the 1990s. Employees serve as role models and mentors in life lessons, conflict-resolution, and career choices. Students in the program are suggested by the principals based on a need for guidance and role models due to issues with academics, behavior and/or home life.

Accessibility and Interaction

WSSC is constantly looking at new ways to deliver important information to, and receive feedback from, our customers. That increasingly means utilizing the latest technologies to communicate. **WSSC’s Mobile App** allows residents to help us pinpoint problems and resolve issues faster. Customers can report problems with their service, pay their bill, or monitor their water usage.

Customers can also connect with WSSC on social media. Anyone can “like” WSSC on **Facebook at “WSSC Water”** or follow us on **Twitter @WSSCWaterNews** where we post WSSC news, **community** information, post pictures from WSSC community outreach events, and share environmental and conservation contributions. While it is not our preferred method for taking complaints, some customers do choose to voice their complaints or needs on these public platforms.

In addition, **WSSCWater.com** provides targeted information for specific neighborhoods and commuting routes. Customers can type in their address, and our interactive map, **In Your Neighborhood**, will provide up-to-date information on pipeline projects, from planning to design and construction. Finally, by enrolling in the **WSSC Customer Notification System (CNS)**, customers can receive email and/or text notifications when there’s an emergency or scheduled service interruption. Thousands of customers have already signed up for this service.

Responsibility to ALL of Our Customers

In a previous section (Financial Management), we discussed the new Customer Assistance Program (CAP) which is funded with ratepayer dollars as part of the operating budget. It provides a credit for Ready to Serve Charges to qualifying customers. But long before CAP, there was the **WSSC Water Fund**, which provides assistance to customers with immediate short terms funds to pay their water bill. It is funded by customer and employee donations and administered through a partnership with the Salvation Army. Bolstered by the Round-Up Program where customers can “round up” their payment to the next dollar with the extra money going to the fund, it raises over \$100,000 per year.

In addition, WSSC is fully committed to supplier diversity, providing many opportunities for Small, Local and Minority Business Enterprises to do business with us, whether directly with WSSC, or by subcontracting through primary suppliers. In FY14, WSSCC paid women and minority businesses nearly \$100 million.