

Water. Essential.



2001 ANNUAL REPORT  
Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission





# Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

## 2001 ANNUAL REPORT

You trust that it will be there when you turn on the tap. You expect it to be fresh and clean. You assume it will always ensure the health of your family by carrying wastes from your home. And should you ever be threatened by fire, you know it will gush forth to help protect you, your family and those things that are most precious to you.

Now *that's* essential.

Water is needed to sustain life every day. Yet, chances are, you rarely give it a second thought. At the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), that's just fine with us. Because it's our job to quietly care for you and our environment round-the-clock, faithfully providing one of life's most valuable resources.

### CONTENTS

<b>Chairman's Message</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>•</b>	<b>General Manager's Message</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>•</b>	<b>Safe</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Dependable</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>•</b>	<b>Caring</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>•</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Smart</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>•</b>	<b>Connected</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>•</b>	<b>Protective</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Clean</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>•</b>	<b>Financials</b>	<b>21</b>			



(Left to Right) W. Gregory Wims, *Montgomery County*; Juanita D. Miller, *Prince George's County*; Kevin P. Maloney, Chair, *Montgomery County*; Jinhee Kim Wilde, *Montgomery County*; Marita B. Brown, Vice Chair, *Prince George's County*; Manuel R. Geraldo, *Prince George's County*

## Message From the Commission Chair

*Water. Essential.* A fitting theme for our 2001 Annual Report. From a refreshing drink to a cool rain, water is an essential part of our daily lives. Behind the simple task of turning a faucet are 1,500 WSSC employees working to help ensure the quality of life for our 1.6 million customers living, working and playing in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. It is complicated, precise, hard work; and our employees love it.

As Commission Chair, it is a privilege to work with a team of talented employees who constantly fulfill WSSC's mission to provide clean water to our customers and the environment. They dedicate themselves to producing water that meets — or does better than — strict U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards.

I hope this report will help you to appreciate their commitment to serving you as much as I do.

  
KEVIN P. MALONEY  
COMMISSION CHAIR

## Message From the General Manager

WSSC. *Essential*. We are proud of our 83-year history of customer service, professionalism and technical expertise. The men and women of WSSC have long respected your fundamental daily need for our essential services. For decades, we have quietly gone about our business of supplying drinking water, collecting wastewater, and building and maintaining the necessary infrastructure to make it all happen.

Then something changed a few years ago. Large international companies started to buy public water and wastewater utilities around the country, claiming to save money while serving local customers they did not know. You started to ask questions about whether or not we could serve you better while minimizing costs, and rightly so.

It became essential for us to transform ourselves into a stronger, more resilient organization, and I am pleased to say we are doing it. We have been cutting costs and reducing staff while preserving quality and employee safety. We continue to streamline our operations, work smarter and stabilize rates. In 2001, we entered our fourth consecutive fiscal year with no rate increases. We earned coveted AAA bond ratings from all three rating agencies, due in large part to our operational turnaround, hard work of our employees and progressive fiscal and strategic plans.

Nothing could have prepared us, however, for the new meaning of “essential” as it relates to our mission following September 11. Please be assured we are taking all appropriate steps to safeguard your water.

You will read in this report about how we provide you with water for drinking and fire protection, and how we take away your wastewater and make it clean for the environment. But, essentially, what it all comes down to, is helping to preserve your health and safety every day. Thank you for entrusting us with that responsibility.

  
JOHN R. GRIFFIN  
GENERAL MANAGER







Ryen, *Bathing Beauty of Calverton*. Ryen's parents don't think about the safety of water when they're giving her a bath, and we work hard to make sure they never do. We consistently meet state and federal guidelines for clean water, and Ryen's parents (and you) can trust that we always will.



## SAFE

We know you trust us to provide you with safe water, and we take our responsibility very seriously. Producing safe water is a balance of science and art, experience and care, technology and craftsmanship. From changing weather conditions to daily fluctuations in the water we draw from the Potomac and Patuxent rivers, we're constantly monitoring and adjusting our operations to make sure our water meets or does better than all federal and state drinking water requirements. We also work to ensure quality from source to tap by performing ongoing tests at our two water filtration plants and checking thousands of samples from our distribution system. As a matter of fact, we've never violated a drinking water quality standard in our history.

And we plan on keeping it that way. In 2001, we continued to work on the \$45 million upgrading of our Patuxent Filtration Plant and moved forward with a \$1.6 million Potomac Filtration Plant facility evaluation to meet your water needs, as well as evolving federal regulations, for the next 30 years. Of course, we need the best tools to provide clean water. But even more important is a constant commitment to quality. You can count on us to provide safe water now, and for decades to come.

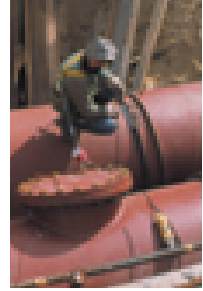
**In 2001, our state-of-the-art laboratory performed more than 500,000 tests to ensure water safety and quality.**





Ronald René, Sous Chef at Clyde's Restaurant of Chevy Chase. A reliable supply of clean, fresh water is essential to everything that happens in a restaurant, from washing crisp, just picked bell peppers to delicately steaming fresh salmon. We continually monitor, repair, upgrade and expand our distribution system to ensure that Ronald and his customers can always count on their water.





## DEPENDABLE

No matter where you live in our 1,000-square mile service area, you're assured a virtually constant supply of clean water thanks to our intricate delivery infrastructure. Millions of gallons of fresh water are traveling right now beneath your feet or below your street in our 5,200-mile underground network of water mains, supported by 60 water storage tanks and 14 pumping stations. We also monitor our distribution system round-the-clock and with the click of a mouse in our Control Center, we direct water to meet your needs.

To help keep our foundation for delivering clean water in good working shape, we invested more than \$23 million in 2001 for water main cleaning, reconstruction and replacement.

What would our dependable distribution system be without a reliable supply of water? Supplementing the water in the Potomac and Patuxent rivers, we depend on four large reservoirs that play a vital role in our overall distribution network. The Triadelphia, Rocky Gorge, Jennings Randolph and Little Seneca reservoirs hold approximately 30 billion gallons of water combined, and help enable us to meet your current and future water supply needs — even during unusual periods of dry weather.



**We distribute an average of 167 million gallons of fresh, clean water every day.**



[Laurel Volunteer Fire Department](#). Because water is so essential to your safety, we work with area fire departments to make sure they'll have water when they need it. Because service is so important, we work just as hard to answer questions, make repairs, solve problems and even make bill paying easier for our customers.



## CARING

From lifesaving to thirst quenching and everything in between, water is a constant part of your life. Despite our best efforts, however, there are times when supplying your water and handling your wastewater isn't so constant. And when unavoidable interruptions happen, we spring into action.



From the complexity of repairing a broken 24-inch water main to the simplicity of answering your questions over the phone, we work to ensure you can depend on our services. We even have preventive maintenance programs to find and fix potential problems before they occur. Some call it commitment, others dedication. We call it Customer Care.

We care about your health and respond "24/7" to repair water main breaks or relieve blockages in our sewer mains. We care about your safety, and have crews dedicated to inspecting and repairing our 30,000 fire hydrants. We care about your needs and work to make all of your experiences with us pleasant and efficient.

In 2001, we implemented several new bill payment options, including E-Z Pay, which allows you to efficiently pay your water and sewer bill from your checking account. We also launched an enhanced bottled water delivery program for customers temporarily impacted by water service disruptions.

**In 2001, we repaired 1,476 water main breaks and delivered nearly 1,000 gallons of bottled water to customers.**



WSSC's Jerome Perry and Curious Observer Dwayne Harley, II at the Woodford Lane Project, Upper Marlboro. The communities we serve have different needs: new communities need new water and wastewater pipes, while existing communities need pipes repaired, upgraded or replaced. To serve all types of communities, we work closely with officials from both Counties and our own engineers to anticipate needs and support new construction to ensure a reliable supply of water and efficient wastewater treatment.





## STRONG

They say there is strength in numbers. At WSSC, our strength comes not only from our 1,500 dedicated men and women, but from the strong investments we make in our world-class facilities and underground water and wastewater distribution systems.

From advanced treatment plants to community-oriented water towers, we work closely with you to plan, design and build facilities and pipelines that meet your needs. Making sure your investments pay off in the long run is equally as important. We accomplish this by working with our County partners to analyze existing water demands, sewer flows, and population projections. We also look at planned development to prepare for new demands before they arrive.

Using the latest techniques and innovative construction methods, we deliver projects on time and on budget. After all, it's you — our valued customer — who actually invests in these projects. And we make sure that it's a long-term investment in an ample supply of safe, clean water.

**In 2001, we continued our \$100 million investment to upgrade several water and wastewater treatment plants to ensure our water quality continues to meet increasingly stringent federal standards.**





Phillip Reed and My Van Luu, WSSC Consolidated Lab, Silver Spring. We test water from throughout the area we serve every day for nearly 200 substances. We also publish an annual water quality report that details how our water meets or does better than federal and state requirements. Additionally, we perform many tests for County governments, generating income that helps stabilize our rates.



## SMART

For more than 80 years, you've trusted us to provide you with quality water and to safely take care of your wastewater. But in today's competitive environment, a reputable history is not enough. To truly be successful, we must build upon our history as we continuously seek new ways to meet your needs. For us, that means using the latest technology and most efficient business practices, creating new financial courses, seeking growth opportunities and providing our employees with the resources to meet future challenges.

We did just that by completing our first strategic plan — a roadmap for the future that puts you, our customer, first in all we do, and details our objectives and initiatives to make us more competitive. This, on the heels of our first fiscal plan, played a key role in our ability to earn WSSC's first-ever AAA bond ratings from all three top rating agencies.



We also began to supplement our ongoing efforts to stabilize rates by initiating revenue-generating contracts to provide services at our new, state-of-the-art lab to several local governments. And speaking of innovation, we unveiled several cutting-edge computer applications in 2001 to provide you with more information on upcoming WSSC projects and emergency work.

**WSSC received the 2001 Gold Award for Competitiveness Achievement  
from the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies.**



Brian Davis, WSSC Employee and Science Fair Judge, and Alexandra Butcher, a Student at Beltsville Academic Center. We encourage our employees to be part of the communities we serve. Often you'll see them at community events, environmental clean-ups and, in this case, judging school science fairs.





## CONNECTED

Providing you with vital services every day just isn't enough. We like to get personal. That's why from Damascus, Montgomery County to Clinton, Prince George's County, WSSC employees can be found taking part in dozens of community activities, from judging school science fairs to swinging hammers and renovating homes for low-income residents in the *Christmas in April* program.



Founded 12 years ago, our Mentor Team strives to enhance the lives of area kids, and in that time has touched thousands of young lives. We also educate elementary and middle school students about water conservation, clean water and the environment as part of our annual *Speak Out* program.

Employees contributed more than \$100,000 for our 2001 United Way campaign, far exceeding our goal of \$78,500.

Our Customer Advisory Board continually provides suggestions as to how we can best serve you. We also work to stay connected through our web site, informational publications, public hearings and project-related community meetings.

**WSSC employees reached out to our local and national neighbors following the September 11 tragedy with gifts of blood, money and resources. Employees gave more than \$5,000 to Red Cross Disaster Relief and assisted the New York Fire Department at ground zero by providing essential supplies.**



Thomas Miller and Grandpa Tom Beard, Fishermen at the Rocky Gorge Reservoir. Besides storing the water we need, the Triadelphia and Rocky Gorge reservoirs, which are fed by the Patuxent River, are places of natural beauty. The 6,000 acres surrounding the reservoirs act as natural filters for pollutants, helping to enhance water quality.



## PROTECTIVE

Generations of WSSC customers have relied on us to meet their water needs. Serving you today, as well as ensuring clean water for your grandchildren, depends on more than our treatment, distribution and maintenance operations. It starts at the source. Literally.

Our Potomac and Patuxent rivers watershed protection efforts include assessing water quality, maintaining forested land around our reservoirs to filter pollutants and encouraging responsible land use practices. Our Environmental Advisory Committee, comprised of local residents, shares advice on designing WSSC projects to avoid or minimize community and environmental impacts.

You have a role in protecting your water sources too. That's why we coordinate many volunteer efforts such as watershed clean ups, tree plantings and educational sessions on reducing polluted runoff into our reservoirs and area streams. Plus, our *Adopt-a-School* program teaches healthy watershed habits to tomorrow's environmental stewards.

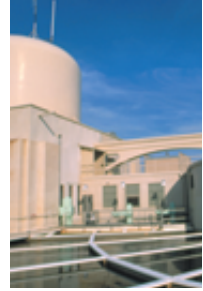


**More than 800 area residents learned about protecting their drinking water sources by participating in our 2001 Earth Month activities. Over 3,000 trees were planted in the Patuxent Reservoirs Watershed.**



William Shorter and Ghanshyam Daitnarayan, PerkinElmer, Beltsville. Industrial companies need water to clean, cool and otherwise assist in manufacturing. WSSC works with industrial customers to ensure that used water is returned to the wastewater system safely, efficiently and within government regulations.





# CLEAN

“Out of sight, out of mind” probably sums up your thoughts about wastewater. After all, who wants to think about what happens with the water after you flush the toilet or wash the dishes?

We do. Collecting and treating your wastewater is vitally important to protecting your health and the health of our environment. In addition to the millions of gallons of residential wastewater traveling daily through our 5,200 miles of sewer mains, millions more come from hundreds of restaurants and industries. In all, we collect more than 180 million gallons of wastewater a day to be cleaned.

Our infrastructure also includes six treatment plants, 43 pumping stations and a cadre of dedicated employees. Those employees work to process your wastewater, minimize sewer overflows, investigate hazardous spills into the sewer system and inspect industrial and commercial establishments to ensure compliance with WSSC regulations. We invested more than \$8 million last year to repair and replace aging sewer mains and continued work on the \$70 million expansion of our Seneca Wastewater Treatment Plant.



Fats, oils and grease clog our wastewater system and cause more than 60 percent of blockages. In 2001, we launched the *Cease the Grease* public awareness program to remind you not to dump grease and garbage down your drains.

**WSSC is helping to meet Chesapeake Bay restoration goals by using the latest phosphorus and nitrogen removal technologies at our wastewater treatment plants — well ahead of other utilities in the region.**

**Capital \$194,065,000**

General Construction \$34,277,000 (17.7%)

Water Supply \$54,967,000 (28.3%)

Sewage Disposal \$104,821,000 (54.0%)

Utilities \$10,997,000 (2.4%)

Regional Sewage Disposal \$31,000,000 (6.7%)

Salaries and Wages \$67,563,000 (14.5%)

All Other \$135,773,000 (29.3%)

Debt Service \$218,588,000 (47.1%)

**Operating \$463,921,000**

## Financials

2001

The foundation of our fiscal plan is a budget process that focuses on rate stabilization and ensures we will continue to provide safe drinking water, guarantee reliable service and safeguard the environment — all in a financially responsible manner. Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 is the fourth year in a row with no increases in water and sewer rates.

The FY '02 Approved Operating Budget of \$463.9 million represents an increase of \$6.4 million (1.4 percent) over the FY '01 Approved Budget of \$457.5 million. The FY '02 Approved Capital Budget of \$194.1 million represents a decrease of \$2.1 million (1.1 percent) from the FY '01 Approved Budget of \$196.2 million.

WSSC's annual financial statements again received a “clean” audit opinion by independent Certified Public Accountants.

**Our proposed fiscal year 2003 budget once again projects  
no increases in water and sewer rates, making it our  
fifth consecutive year without a rate increase.**



Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

---

14501 Sweitzer Lane • Laurel • Maryland 20707

301.206.8000 • 800.828.6439

[www.wsscwater.com](http://www.wsscwater.com)