



What's on Tap

News for Customers of the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (WASA)

March 2007

Outgoing WASA board chairman reflects on challenges and progress

Dear Customers,

Since resigning as Chairman of the WASA Board of Directors last December, I have chaired the monthly board meetings on an interim basis. The March 2007 meeting will be my last, so I am taking this opportunity to review some of WASA's achievements.

After its creation as an independent regional authority from the District government in 1996, WASA overcame what seemed to be almost insurmountable challenges – a failing water and sewer system and near bankruptcy – to become one of the nation's preeminent public utilities.

The early years of WASA's existence were concentrated on repairs and much-needed upgrades to the Blue Plains wastewater treatment plant. At the same time, WASA was replacing miles of deteriorating water and sewer lines and improving pump stations, so the nation's capital would have reliable and safe water and sewer services. When Mayor Williams asked me in 2000 to volunteer as chairman, I accepted the opportunity because I wanted

to have a role in the revitalization of Washington.

In the ensuing six years, our focus turned principally to customer service. WASA now has a sophisticated customer



WASA Board Chair Glenn S. Gerstell
2001–2006

computer system at our Call Center. Customers can, with just one phone call, access a range of services, from setting up a direct debit for monthly bill payments to obtaining a final water bill for

a home sale. All this and more can now be done on WASA's website (www.dcwasa.com), which also has a great deal of information about our water and sewer system. Customers can also access real-time alerts about where WASA crews are doing work that may impact service or traffic.

We have customer projects underway that are the largest of their kind in the nation. Two



examples are the replacement of old water meters in every house and apartment building with accurate, automated meters, and the replacement of all lead service lines in public space with copper pipe. We have already replaced nearly a third of the estimated 34,000 lead lines to help insure that our water supply is as safe as possible.

WASA has also made major strides in environmental protection. For example, we are undertaking a multi-billion dollar program to reduce 96 percent of the combined overflows (CSOs) in our local waterways. The first phase of the work will be completed in 2008 and

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result in a 40 percent reduction. With a 20-year timeline and a cost of \$2.2 billion, the next phase is the longest and most expensive.

Operationally, WASA now runs as efficiently as a business corporation, with a critical public purpose, at all levels of the organization. WASA's prudent financial management has resulted in AA-category bond ratings that reduce costs for our customers.

Our workforce is an integral part of the Authority's success. More than 900 employees work at WASA. Whether it's repairing a broken water main in the dead of winter or helping an elderly customer work out a budget plan for her water bills, our employees perform a critical public service for our community, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



I close by expressing my true appreciation for the sustained and excellent efforts of my colleagues on the WASA board and our general manager and his team. I also wish to thank the citizens of this region for the opportunity to serve them.

Glenn S. Gerstell
Chairman of the Board



District of Columbia
Water and Sewer
Authority

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WASA participates in environmental film festival

WASA, in cooperation with the 15th Annual Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital, will present three water-themed



children's films at District neighborhood libraries.

From March 15 to March 25, 2007, the Festival will present 100 documentary, feature, animated, archival, experimental and children's films from around the world with social and ecological themes. Many films are premieres, and filmmakers will speak about their work.

A Water Conservation Specialist will facilitate a discussion and short presentation entitled *What's Up With Water?* following each WASA film. Contact Helen Strong at (202) 342-2564 for information or visit the festival's website at www.dcenvironmentalfilmfest.org.

Two programs offer assistance

The DC Department of Human Services has a 24-hour social services information and referral call center. *211 Answers, Please*, offers District residents access to a network of government and community providers by dialing 211. This number is connected to vital social services such as health care, shelter, job training and substance abuse.

In addition, the District Department of the Environment (DDOE) Energy Division is offering emergency financial assistance to low-income District residents who are having trouble paying their gas or electric bills.

An applicant whose electric service has



been cut off does not need an appointment to apply. They may come to the DDOE, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:30 am and 4:30 pm, with proof of income, most recent utility bills and picture ID. The DDOE is located at 2000 14th Street, NW #300E.

For more details on the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program or to schedule an appointment, call the Energy Hotline at (202) 673-6750, or visit the DDOE website at www.ddoe.dc.gov.

How to prepare for flood emergencies

Often, rain and snow can bring threats of water damage to your home. Here are some suggestions to follow so that you are prepared if flooding occurs:

- Ask your local planning and zoning office whether your property is above or below the flood level, and find out if your area has a history of flooding.
- Consider purchasing flood insurance for your home, as most homeowners' policies don't cover flood damage.
- Keep important documents such as insurance policies, birth certificates and passports in an easily accessible waterproof box.
- Know how to turn your electricity off in the event your house becomes flooded. Do not turn it back on until everything has dried out.
- Stock up on clean drinking water since it can become contaminated during major flooding.
- Remove leaves and debris from gutters and drains. Water could overflow and rot the roof area woodwork or seep into the foundation of the home.
- Caulk cracks around windows and doors to prevent water from seeping inside.
- Test your sump pump to make sure it will be in good working order if a storm hits.
- If water damage occurs, get help right away because mold and mildew growth starts almost immediately.



For more information, visit WASA's website at www.dcwasa.com.

Para informar emergencias del agua residuales, llama (202) 612-3400.

Report Emergencies 24 Hours a day!

To report improper use of hydrants, clogged catch basins, water main leaks, or suspected sewer backups, call (202) 612-3400.

To reach WASA's Lead Services Line, call (202) 787-2732.