

WHAT'S ON



TAP?

NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS | VOL. 14 ISSUE 10

General Manager's Message: Partners for the Environment



Dear Customers,

I hope you've noticed our new feature in recent issues of *What's On Tap?* Each month we are spotlighting organizations that do great work in our communities, particularly to improve the environment. This month you can read about Casey Trees, a non-profit organization dedicated to growing the tree canopy in the District of Columbia. We've also written about the Anacostia Watershed Society and the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, and will spotlight more organizations in the coming months.

Our goal is to draw your attention to the many contributions these organizations are making to our quality of life and to the health of our waterways. We consider them partners—their efforts go hand in hand with our improvements in wastewater treatment and the \$2.6 billion investment to reduce Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) into the Potomac River, Anacostia River and Rock Creek.

The men and women who work and volunteer for these organizations usually operate out of the limelight, but we hope this feature will give you a better appreciation for their efforts to improve and protect the environment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'George S. Hawkins'.

George S. Hawkins
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Wipes in the Pipes: The Problem of Not-So-Flushable Wipes

You may have read recent articles, like the one in the *Washington Post*, about baby wipes or personal wipes that are marketed as “flushable,” though they actually do not break down in the sewer system. Sewer and wastewater professionals have seen an alarming increase in problems attributable to these products, from damaging pumps to causing clogs in public and private sewer lines. In 2013 alone, DC Water staff spent more than 500 hours

clearing wipes out of sewer pumps before they could perform routine maintenance. Equipment failure and clogged sewer lines are expensive and in the end, we all pay for them. So please take care to throw wipes, facial tissue, paper towels and other products in the garbage can and not the toilet. Only toilet paper is engineered to break down in the sewer system.



Wastewater Research Laboratory Gets High-Tech Makeover

At the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant, engineers and scientists perform groundbreaking research in wastewater treatment processes. The home to that research—the laboratory building—recently reopened after a two-year overhaul. The original building was constructed when the plant opened in 1937, to house administrative offices.

The renovated building is now an ideal lab— climate-controlled, with a new wing for biosolids research.

The work in the lab serves two purposes. The first is routine sampling or production work that tests samples from the plant to ensure it is running optimally. Second, it houses research teams that are investigating how to decrease energy needs, reduce the carbon footprint, save money and reduce capacity. The lab supports about two dozen students from



colleges and universities from across the nation who are working on DC Water projects for their masters or Ph.D. research.

DC Water is Proud to Deliver High-Quality Drinking Water



DC Water continuously tests drinking water to ensure that safe, great-tasting water reaches your tap. In a single month, hundreds of water samples are collected across the District. Technicians use portable testing equipment, including two mobile laboratories, to perform on-site water quality tests. Water samples are also analyzed at DC Water's Drinking Water Division facility and at the Washington Aqueduct's laboratory.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires public water systems to test for more than 90 regulated contaminants. The test results must be reported to EPA and made available to the public. Every year, DC Water includes these results in the yearly water quality report, which can be accessed online or requested in print form. In addition to this monitoring, DC Water performs voluntary water testing in schools, daycares, and research sites around the city. This additional testing helps us to learn more about water quality and to prioritize improvements to the distribution system.

To review the 2013 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report and learn about household water quality tips, visit our website at dcwater.com/drinking_water or call the Drinking Water Division at (202) 612-3440, Monday through Friday, 8 am to 4:30 pm.

HUNA to the Rescue

Leaks in your home can add up quickly on your water bill. Did you know that one leaking toilet can waste more than \$400 of water in a month? (To see how, visit bit.ly/toiletvideo) DC Water created an application, the High Usage Notification Alert (or HUNA), that identifies spikes in a home's water usage. Through automatic meter reading technology, usage is recorded twice daily. When that usage spikes to several times the normal usage, over the course of four days, the app automatically alerts the customer through a phone call, email or text. DC Water has sent 20,308 HUNA alerts in the last 24 months alone. Some customers have been saved from an incredibly high water bill while others have been saved from property damage. One customer was alerted to a leak in the home while on vacation. Sending someone to check on the house saved his property and valuables. Customers are automatically enrolled in HUNA if they provide either a phone number or email address; however, they may also add or change contact information by calling Customer Service at (202) 354-3600 or online at their My DC Water account.

Spotlight on Casey Trees

Washington, DC was originally planned to support a lush tree canopy with extensive green spaces and tree-lined boulevards. The District still boasts more green space per capita than any other city in the United



States, but is now at a historical low of 36 percent. The decline encouraged Betty Brown Casey, a longtime area resident, to establish Casey Trees in 2002 with its mission: "To restore, enhance and protect the tree canopy of the Nation's Capital."

More recently, DC Mayor Vincent Gray set a 40 percent tree canopy goal and included it in the **Sustainable DC Plan**. To help realize this goal, Casey Trees implements two programs funded by the District Department of the Environment – **RiverSmart Homes** and **Tree Rebate** – where private property owners can re-tree their lots at a very modest cost. For groups looking to re-tree their property or neighborhoods with 10 or more trees, there is a **Community Tree Planting Program** which provides trees, tools and technical assistance at no cost.

Casey Trees also has online resources to assist in selecting and planting trees, including a tree species library, instructional videos and location guide.

To learn more about Casey Trees and how to support their efforts, consider becoming a Member, Volunteer or advocate for change. Call Casey Trees at (202) 833-4010 or visit caseytrees.org



Photo courtesy of Casey Trees



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY
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