

# WHAT'S ON



# TAP?

NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS | VOL. 15 ISSUE 1

## General Manager's Message

Dear Customers,

This is a period of great progress at DC Water, with incredible construction projects underway that will upgrade our water distribution and sewage collection systems, help clean up our rivers, and improve our treatment process at the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant. Some of these projects are mandated by the federal government, and they are expensive, which puts pressure on our budget. That in turn drives up our rates and your water and sewer bills.

Given that, it is critically important that we at DC Water do everything we can to keep our costs down and to find ways to save money through more efficient operations and innovation. For example, one of the projects underway now at Blue Plains will turn waste into energy using a process called thermal hydrolysis. DC Water will be able to create enough electricity to power about a third of the treatment plant, for a savings of about \$10 million a year.

That is just one example of the incredible innovation our engineers have applied on the plant. That's why I recently created an Office of Innovation to expand this effort Authority-wide. If we think outside the box, I'm confident we will find many ways to improve our operations, provide better service to our customers, and lessen needed rate increases in the coming years.

George S. Hawkins  
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## DC WATER ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2013

In 2013, DC Water continued global leadership in water sector science and technology. Just a few highlights for the year follow.

**Naming Ceremony** – DC Water hosted elected officials, environmentalists, the media and guests in a celebration to unveil the tunnel boring machine (TBM) named “Lady Bird” after the famous First Lady devoted to environmental beautification. The TBM was lowered underground, assembled and mined more than 1,000 feet by the end of the year. She is currently under the Potomac River in her journey to help alleviate combined sewer overflows as part of the Clean Rivers Project.

**Other construction milestones** –

- DC Water completed the years-long work to rehabilitate the Crosstown Tunnel, a large water transmission main.
- The Enhanced Nutrient Removal project on Blue Plains made significant progress towards becoming operational in 2014.
- DC Water made strides in the digester project, erecting 100-foot digesters and thermal hydrolysis vessels. When completed in 2014, the facilities will turn the solids left over after the wastewater treatment process into combined heat and power. About one-third of the plant's electricity needs will be provided by the digesters.
- DC Water conducted public out-

reach and engineering planning for projects to help mitigate flooding in Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park.

**Award-winning work** – The Authority and its staff won numerous awards in 2013, including:

- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) – *Government Finance Officers Association*
- Distinguished Budget Award – *Government Finance Officers Association*
- 2013 Research Grand Prize (for Mainstream Deammonification project) – *American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists*
- Gold Award (for 100 percent NPDES permit compliance) – *National Association of Clean Water Agencies*

**Employees lend a hand** – DC Water's first full year of employee donations through payroll deduction netted more than \$19,085, pushing the total donations for FY 2013 to \$115,455. DC Water was able to assist 359 families to keep their critical water service on.

DC Water employees also collected more than 350 winter coats, donating them to local shelters

DC Water participated in Bread for the Soul by donating toys, books and money for food baskets to District families affected by HIV and AIDS. Employees have generously provided for more than 1000 families over the last 12 years.

## Start the year off with tap water!



Photo courtesy of United States Environmental Protection Agency

Millions of people around the world lack access to safe drinking water. In the U.S., we have the luxury of enjoying clean water when we turn on the faucet. DC Water delivers high-quality drinking water to the District every day, and we encourage customers to choose tap in the New Year.

### Four reasons to drink tap water in 2014:

**Tap water is safe.** DC Water conducts hundreds of tests each week to monitor water quality throughout the distribution system. The District's tap water meets national drinking water standards and frequently surpasses minimum quality requirements established by law.

**Tap water is affordable.** At a penny per gallon, tap water is much less expensive than bottled water or manufactured beverages.

**Tap water tastes good.** Results of our 2013 District-wide taste tests show that over 60 percent of residents prefer the taste of tap

water or could not tell the difference between tap and bottled water.

**Tap water is the most sustainable choice.**

Bottled water production requires massive amounts of water, energy and resources. Only 25 percent of plastic bottles are recycled, and the rest end up in landfills or waterways.

### Ensuring water quality.

Drinking water quality is a responsibility that DC Water shares with its customers. Pipe materials and plumbing fixtures can reduce quality as water travels to the tap. Follow these tips to ensure excellent drinking water quality in your home:

1. Flush cold water for two minutes before using water for drinking and cooking if water hasn't been used for several hours.
2. Do not use hot tap water for drinking and cooking.
3. Routinely clean faucet strainers and replace them every one to two years (available in hardware stores).
4. If you use a water filter, follow the manufacturer's instructions for replacement to prevent build up of bacteria and metals.

## Winter and Water Main Breaks

With changes in temperature, water mains are more susceptible to breaking due to expansion and contraction of the pipe material, weakening the mains. Pipe corrosion, soil conditions, age and ground movement can also cause a water main to break, creating unexpected problems for customers and motorists.

DC Water averages about 400 water main breaks per year and most occur in the winter months. For this reason, the Authority schedules more stand-by crews in the winter, and in recent years has cross-trained sewer repair workers to also make water main repairs.

Repairs are prioritized based on several factors such as severity of the break, impact to customers and the environment, potential damage to public and private property, and unsafe traffic conditions. When emergency water main breaks cause

widespread service disruptions they become critical repairs. In general, it takes six to eight hours to repair a water main if it is straight-forward and all the necessary parts are on hand.

A DC Water video explains the steps involved in repairing a water main break. It can be viewed at: [bit.ly/mainbreaks](http://bit.ly/mainbreaks).

Anyone observing water

running from streets or sidewalks is encouraged to report the leak for a crew to inspect. To do this, call DC Water's 24-hour Command Center at (202) 612-3400 or report it on the website



Photo courtesy of United States Environmental Protection Agency

[dcwater.com](http://dcwater.com), or tweet @dcwater with a picture and location.

Please provide specific information about the location and appearance of the break. For listings of current repairs, please visit the [dcwater.com](http://dcwater.com) home page and click on the location under "In Your Neighborhood."



### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

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