

Water

N E W S

September 2003

Infrastructure Series, Part IV

Takin' it to the Streets

Remember the last time you drove over a bumpy road or hit a pothole and wished that "someone would fix it" making the street smooth and level again?

It's easy to understand the needs and the process of repairing and replacing streets and other structures that we can easily see. It's not always easy, however, to grasp the need to fix things we can't see – like the city's water and sewer mains.

Our water and wastewater infrastructure consists of a massive system of pipes, water wells, pumps, storage tanks, treatment facilities, and pump stations. The city has more than 9,000 miles of water and sewer mains buried below the 560-square miles that SAWS serves – enough to stretch from South Texas to Australia!

"There's so much more to our water service than meets the eye," says Leonard Young, SAWS Senior Vice President. "And like all types of urban infrastructure, SAWS pipes, pumps, tanks and treatment plants have limits on its capacity as well as a finite life span."

Overall, San Antonio's water delivery system is in good shape. The wastewater collection system, on the other hand, needs some immediate attention. Nearly 25 percent of San Antonio's sewer system is in poor or critical condition. Emergency sewer repairs occur too often and are usually very expensive.

While infrastructure improvements aren't cheap, they're still much less expensive than making emergency repairs on a crisis basis. Currently SAWS is only replacing infrastructure at the rate of once every 200 years – while a 50-year replacement is the optimal range.

To keep costs down, SAWS is looking at an 85-year infrastructure plan costing about \$110 million per year. SAWS projects that this kind of investment will help solve immediate infrastructure needs, particularly on the sewer side, yet not leave our children with an expensive problem in the future. A diverse citizens' committee, has been reviewing SAWS charges and will be soon be making recommendations.



SAWS Director of Infrastructure Planning, Kelley Neumann, discusses San Antonio's infrastructure issues.

SAWS Speakers Want to Meet with Your Community Organization

SAWS representatives have already made over sixty presentations to groups throughout the community. We'd like to have the opportunity to meet with your organization to present information about the challenges of San Antonio's water and wastewater infrastructure.

For more information on the city's infrastructure, or to request a presentation to your community organization, please call SAWS at 704-7548. Additional information is also available on SAWS website at www.saws.org.

Southeast Bexar Meeting Provides ASR Update

On August 19 community members and SAWS representatives met to discuss the progress at SAWS Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) site.



The ASR is a proven water storage management tool that will allow San Antonio to store Edwards Aquifer water during rainy times for use during dry South Texas summers. SAWS' ASR Project will be the second-largest of its kind in the nation. The ASR project includes a well-field, water treatment plant, high-service pump stations, and pipelines.

Residents in the area expressed concern for individual wells that they depend on for water. Fluctuating water levels could occur as water is pumped into and out of the Carrizo Aquifer, disrupting the function of these nearby private wells.

Because that possibility exists, SAWS has a policy of ensuring that households that are affected by SAWS projects are taken care of. This may take various forms, depending on the situation.

In fact, SAWS is implementing a pre-mitigation program to ensure that well owners have uninterrupted service once the project goes on line.

Questions also came up concerning how ASR would affect the quality of the water in the area. SAWS has contracted with the leading ASR experts in the world to review the quality of the aquifer water in the surrounding area. The scientific results have found that the Carrizo Aquifer water quality will not be affected by the project.

SAWS ASR Project is scheduled to be completed in early 2004.



Local Neighborhoods Report Water Savings

By Calvin Finch, Ph.D.; SAWS Director of Conservation

There are some neighborhood associations across the state that resist doing their part for water conservation by requiring that every homeowner use St. Augustine grass and an irrigation system. On the other hand, there are a number of neighborhoods in San Antonio that are leaders in water conservation.



Community Conservation Challenge is a program sponsored by SAWS that allows neighborhoods to set their own water conservation goals and, if they achieve those goals, receive a cash award based on the goal and the number of participants. The award must be used for a pre-approved group project. In 2002 Dream Hill Estates near Medical Center was the top performer. High Country Village in the northwest had the second highest savings. Both neighborhoods used their cash award to repair their neighborhood's clubhouse.

This year 37 groups are participating in the Community Challenge. As a further motivation to save water, groups in 2003 have the opportunity for monthly awards. The competition extends over a six-month period this summer that began in May. May was very hot and dry but a group of Southeast-side families associated with the St. Benedict's CYO boys' baseball team organized to save 10 percent water over the same month over an average of the last three years. They are participating in order to buy the team new baseball equipment and uniforms.



A SAWS volunteer loads a new toilet into a truck for a Community Challenge participant.

In June many of the participating neighborhoods saved over 20 percent of the water used in the comparison period. Leading the pack was the 48 SAWS customers signed up with the Madonna Center team. They reduced water use by 32 percent. Norma Funari, Executive Director of the Center, says her neighborhood is a low water using group to begin with, but they still had lots of old high-flow toilets. Taking advantage of the free low-flow toilets from SAWS they replaced high flow in the participating homes. On an average, that will reduce water use by nearly 1,000 gallons/month in a household.

University Oaks neighborhood ran a close second to Madonna Center in June's competition. The neighborhood utilized the free low-flow toilet offer from SAWS and have a new low water use landscape around their clubhouse. The Boy Scouts of Troop 777, including Eagle Scout candidates, did much of the work. Volunteers not only planted the landscape, they are conducting classes related to water use at the site.

Other neighborhoods that achieved outstanding water savings in June are: Eden HOA, 26%; Oak Hollow HOA, 26%; Valencia HOA, 20%; Thunderbird HOA, 20%; and Skyline HOA, 18%. To view all of the groups and their conservation success go to the SAWS web site, click on Conservation from the top banner, and then click on Community Challenge listed on the right.

If your neighborhood or other group wants information about the 2004 Community Challenge, now is the time to contact Janie Guzman or Ed Wilcut at SAWS. They can provide literature, information over the phone (704 7354), and speak to your group. It takes a group of 25 SAWS customers to participate in the Community Challenge.

Avoid the Flu Bug!

The flu season is coming up, so the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (SAMHD) is encouraging everyone six months of age and older to get a flu shot starting in October. Flu shots are safe, effective, and cannot give you the flu since the vaccine is made with a dead virus.

Pneumonia vaccines are also highly encouraged for those 65 years and older and people with chronic health conditions. For more information, contact your healthcare provider or for a schedule of SAMHD clinics, call 207-8790.

Immunize for life! Protect yourself against flu and pneumonia.

Evite el Virus de Influenza!

La temporada de influenza se aproxima. El San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (SAMHD) aconseja que las personas seis meses de edad o mayores reciban la vacuna de influenza empezando en Octubre. Las vacunas de influenza son muy seguras, efectivas y no le causa la influenza porque las vacunas utilizan virusos muertos.

La vacuna de neumonía tambien se aconseja para personas de 65 años de edad o mayores y personas con condiciones crónicas de salud. Para más información, hable con su médico o para un horario de clínicas del SAMHD llame al 207-8790.

Vacúnese por vida! Protéjase contra el influenza y neumonía.

Affordability Programs

SAWS offers a number of programs to help customers having financial hardship with their water bills. To determine if you qualify, please call San Antonio's Community Action Division at 207-7830.

SAWS Vision: SAWS will be the best water and wastewater utility in the United States by 2006.

Water News is published for customers of the San Antonio Water System. For more information regarding Water News, contact the Public Relations Department at (210) 704-7320.

Numbers to Know

Business Office	704-SAWS
Customer Account Information	704-SAWS
Jobline	704-SAWS
T.D.D.	704-1852
CleanStream Hotline	212-5326

24-Hour Emergency

Customer Service/	
Water Waste Reporting	704-SAWS
Visit our website at www.saws.org	