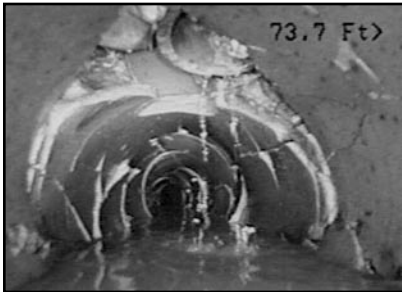


March 2004

City Council Approves Recommended Infrastructure Rate Increases

New Rates Become Effective in March and appear in April Bills

City Council has approved the recommended water and wastewater rate increases that the San Antonio Water System Board of Trustees passed February 3. New rate recommendations were made after an extensive public information and involvement effort with community and business representatives from across the city. The additional revenue generated by the new rates will help SAWS begin to address the need to improve the city's aging water infrastructure.



Replacing failing pipes like this one costs much more than making planned replacements.

“This entire infrastructure improvement issue was thoroughly scrutinized for months by citizens, the media and board members,” SAWS board chairman James Mayor said. “The tough questions have been answered and it’s clear we must get moving to increase our investment in replacing our aging infrastructure.”

The infrastructure increase would raise the average residential customer’s bill \$2.29 to \$27.59 (based on 8,500 gallons/mo. water use, standard rates, and 6,500 gallons/mo. winter average). An interactive rate calculator – that residential customers can use

to see how the recommended changes would affect their bill – is available on SAWS Web site at www.saws.org. Also on our web site is information on SAWS Affordability Programs for customers having financial hardships with water bills. Ratepayers are encouraged to call the city’s Community Action Division - at 207-7830 - to see if they qualify for the various programs.

Age is becoming an issue throughout the city’s water and wastewater system. By 2010 almost 40 percent of SAWS mains will be 50 years old or older, which is the typical life expectancy of pipes. Overall, San Antonio’s water delivery system is very reliable, but nearly 25 percent of the city’s sewer system is in poor or critical condition.

Currently, SAWS has only been able to replace infrastructure at a rate of 200 years, far below the 50-year optimum. The increase in rates will allow for an 85-year replacement rate.

“We felt it important to try and maintain our competitive and affordable water rates,” Chairman Mayor noted. “We think the 85-year replacement rate investment will get us back on track in addressing the infrastructure needs while not placing huge burden on our ratepayers.”

In a recent report on America’s infrastructure by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) it was estimated that the investment in drinking water infrastructure (not counting sewer mains or wastewater plants) falls short \$11 billion every year.

National Audubon Society to Oversee Mitchell Lake

SAWS is finalizing a contract for National Audubon Society to operate the Mitchell Lake Wildlife Refuge as a public use and education facility.

“Audubon is excited about our partnership with SAWS,” said Iliana Pena, Audubon Society’s new Mitchell Lake Center Director. “Our vision of connecting people with nature seems to echo throughout the SAWS organization. We truly look forward to engaging the wonderful city of San Antonio and surrounding area in everything that Mitchell Lake has to offer.”

National Audubon Society (NAS) is a world-class non-profit organization whose mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats.

NAS has a national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs engaging millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences.

Mitchell Lake is located on a migratory route, and serves as a natural resting place for tens of thousands of birds each year. Mitchell Lake already draws birders from around the world but – until now – has been open on a limited basis, and without bathroom or office facilities.



Migrating pelicans sunning at Mitchell Lake.

A Water-saving Landscape for Every Taste

By Calvin Finch, Ph.D.; Conservation Director

If you visit the San Antonio Botanical Garden this spring, be sure to visit the new Lawn and Environmental Exhibit, sponsored in part by SAWS.

The exhibit was created to celebrate the work of the EPA-sponsored Lawns and Environment Committee in producing guidelines for an environmentally responsible natural landscape. The group is meeting in San Antonio in March to finalize the document after two years of work. The exhibit reflects the guidelines and also shows the versatility of a low water use landscape in San Antonio.

There are six different low-water use landscapes. Each is centered on a theme that complements the planting. Whether your taste runs to Cottage Garden, Spanish Courtyard, Wildscape, Manicured Xeriscape, or Hill Country, there is a landscape for you to enjoy. You can also compare your favorite themed low water use example to a regular St. Augustine dominated landscape.

All the plants are identified in the display and other signage and handouts will provide information on how to model your own low water use landscape after the exhibits.

Thanks to SAWS partners on the project including: San Antonio Parks and Recreation, the San Antonio Botanical Society, Texas Turfgrowers Producers,



SAWS employees are working hard putting the finishing touches on the displays.



This Texas setting is just about to get the final landscaping.

GardenVille, Garden Volunteers of South Texas and several area nurseries are constructing the Lawns and Environment display. In addition to our external partners, several SAWS employees were of huge assistance.

The San Antonio Botanical Garden is open from 9 am to 5 pm, seven days a week. Admission is \$5 for adults; \$2 for children ages 3 to 13; \$3 for Seniors ages 55 and up; and \$3 for Military and students with ID.

Entries Sought for WaterSaver Awards

SAWS is looking for 'water-wise' businesses in the San Antonio area that deserve recognition for their special water conservation efforts.

SAWS has teamed up with the San Antonio Business Journal, KENS 5 and KTSA radio



to present the Eighth Annual WaterSaver Awards, recognizing local companies who have taken a leadership role in water conservation efforts. If you have a business you'd like to nominate, download the entry form at the SAWS website www.saws.org, or look for it in the San Antonio Business Journal. Applicants are not required to be SAWS customers.

Application deadline is April 16.

Water Conservation Scholarship

Proceeds from the WaterSaver Breakfast go towards funding the Water Conservation Scholarship. The Scholarship benefits deserving Bexar County high school graduates who are pursuing studies at a Texas University or College in a field related to securing the future water needs on the San Antonio region.

To obtain a scholarship application, log on to the SAWS website at saws.org or call the Conservation Department at 704-7354.

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
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Visit our website at www.saws.org

Mark your calendars!

Spring is a busy time at SAWS. Here are a few events to schedule into your calendar:

April 3-4: Viva Botanica, 9am - 5pm, San Antonio Botanical Garden

April 17: Earth Day, 10am - 4pm, Woodlawn Lake

May 2: Garden Jazz Party, 10am - 2pm, San Antonio Botanical Garden

May 8-9: Xeriscape Garden Tour, Neighborhood to be Announced