

Water stewardship: Working hard to make every drop count

Over the past 25 years, San Antonio Water System has successfully secured new water supplies for our growing city from seven different sources. To manage these diverse supplies, SAWS has also created world-class water conservation programs to help make every drop count.

Rounding out the utility's water stewardship efforts is a renewed focus on non-revenue water — sometimes called “water loss” — to ensure SAWS continues to deliver sustainable and affordable water services for generations to come.

As the name implies, non-revenue water is water that is produced or received but never billed to a customer. And while it does include water “lost” through main breaks and leaks, it also involves authorized, beneficial uses such as firefighting, hydrant and pipe flushing for health and safety, and water for sewer system cleaning.

It also includes “apparent” losses from unreported use such as water theft, and even measurement issues such as inaccurate meters or data errors.



Water loss caused by aging infrastructure is not unique to San Antonio. Cities across the U.S. are struggling to find new ways to measure and reduce water produced but not delivered. SAWS is at the forefront of these efforts.

“Because our 8,000 miles of water pipes are buried underground, solving the problem of breaks and leaks will take time and it will be costly,” said Jeff Haby, SAWS vice president of production.

“The good news is we have already redoubled our efforts on leak detection and repair, and our new ConnectH2O electronic meters are making sure customer use is measured more accurately than ever.”

Haby said the SAWS Board of Trustees has made this program a

priority, and SAWS staff is rising to the occasion.

“Our commitment, as outlined in SAWS’ long-term Water Management Plan, is to reduce non-revenue water by 50% per connection by 2035,” he said. “We’ve already been at this for 10 years, and we’ve been exploring many promising new technologies that can help.”

To learn more about SAWS’ Non-Revenue Water Program, visit saws.org/stewardship.

We’re still in drought — and Stage 3 watering rules

While surprise rains generated some green around San Antonio, they did not bring us out of drought. It will take many more steady rainfalls to overcome the last five years of less-than-adequate rain.

Meanwhile, Stage 3 watering rules remain in effect. This means it’s still important to water only on your assigned day (based on street address).

It’s also important to keep in mind that all residential water use over 20,000 gallons will be subject to additional surcharges on your bill. The same rules apply to landscape watering

for businesses with surcharge amounts based on meter size.

All have an assigned watering day and time based on address. For locations with no obvious address (like medians), the watering day is Wednesday.

If you spot a possible watering rules violation, report it at saws.org/waterwaste. Violations are never issued based on citizen reports, but we will follow up with a warning to let the owner know there’s a problem that needs to be addressed and the location will be monitored for compliance.

Event Calendar

Cinema on Will's Plaza: The Goonies

Aug. 9

Tobin Center
100 Auditorium Circle
tobincenter.org/events

Beneficial Insects in the Landscape

Aug. 16

Eco Centro
1802 N. Main Ave.
ecocentro.eventbrite.com

Guided Bird Tour

Aug. 17

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center
10750 Pleasanton Road
mitchelllake.audubon.org

Family Night Hike

Aug. 22

San Antonio Botanical Garden
555 Funston Place
sabot.org/events

Weekend Artist Workshop: DIY Hula Hoops

Aug. 23

McNay Art Museum
6000 N. New Braunfels Ave.
mcnayart.org/events

Intro to Hiking for Women

Sept. 6

Government Canyon State Natural Area
12861 Galm Road
tpwd.texas.gov/calendar

Customer Service and 24-hour Emergency

210-704-SAWS (7297)

saws.org/waternews

Banish biting bloodsuckers

Recent rain showers have been great for landscapes and wildflowers. But they've also ushered in mosquitos by the millions.

Stop swatting and start enjoying your great outdoors. Help prevent these masters of misery from hanging around.

- Eliminate ALL standing water. Even a tablespoon of water can breed mosquitos.



- Clean bird baths or wildlife water features often.

- Add fish to your ponds. They feast on mosquito larvae.

And the No. 1 way to keep mosquitos at bay? Reduce irrigation! Excess water can collect on vegetation and clay soils and become a mosquito breeding hotspot.

SAWS pipe-tapping teams take top spots at nationals



When we said our crews work fast, we weren't exaggerating! Congratulations to SAWs' men's and women's tapping teams for their first- and second-place wins, respectively, at the American Water Works Association Annual Conference and Exposition held in Denver, June 8-11.

A competition of skill and speed, teams race against the clock to install a tap and connect a service line to a cement-lined, ductile iron pipe — the same way a utility crew would connect water service to a new home.

Tapping for the Alamo Drillerz men's team were Jason Alvarado, Andrew Bratton, Eric Lucio and Eugene Mora, with a winning time of 1:10. On the Alamo City Tappers women's team were Yolanda Garcia, Cathryn Carey, Rosa Castillo and Joslyn Martinez with a winning tap time of 2:57.

Storm drains are only for rain

Rain may be a rare occurrence during the summer months, but when it does happen the San Antonio River and local creeks are inundated with debris and contaminants.

That's because trash from streets and parking lots or chemicals from driveways and landscapes are washed down storm drains and right into the nearest body of water.

It's called runoff — and it's a major source of pollution to the San Antonio River watershed.

You can help prevent pollution and debris from entering our storm drains:

- Toss trash in garbage bins.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly (and avoid using if rain is in the forecast).
- Pick up and dispose of pet waste.
- Use drip pans to catch engine oil and other pollutants when repairing automobiles and recycle them.
- Compost or mulch leaves and yard trimmings instead of sweeping them into the street.
- Direct downspouts and rain gutters away from paved surfaces.