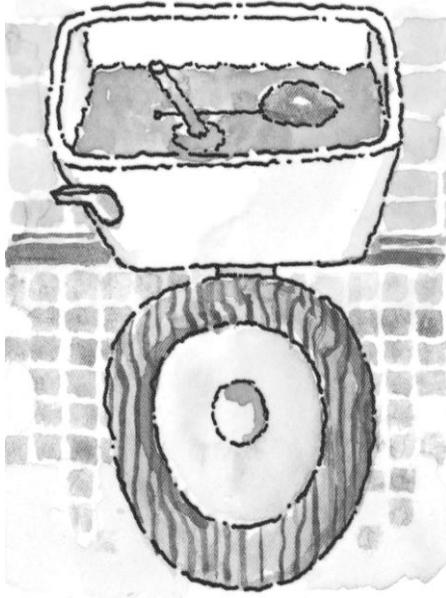


# Wastewater Treatment



Much of the water used by homes, industries, and businesses must be treated before it is released back to the environment. Nature has an amazing ability to cope with small amounts of water wastes and pollution, but it would be overwhelmed if we didn't treat the billions of gallons of wastewater and sewage produced every day before releasing it back to the environment. Treatment plants reduce pollutants in wastewater to a level nature can handle.

Wastewater is used water. It includes substances such as human waste, food scraps, oils, soaps and chemicals. In homes, this includes water from sinks, showers, bathtubs, toilets, washing machines and dishwashers. Businesses and industries also contribute their share of used water that must be cleaned. Wastewater also includes storm runoff. Although some people assume that the rain that runs down the street during a storm is fairly clean, it isn't. Harmful substances that wash off roads, parking lots, and rooftops can harm our rivers and lakes. In San Antonio and many other cities, this type of wastewater never makes it to a treatment facility.

## Why Treat Wastewater?

### Fisheries

Clean water is critical to plants and animals that live in water. This is important to the fishing industry, sport fishing enthusiasts, and future generations.

### Wildlife Habitats

Our rivers and ocean waters teem with life that depends on shoreline, beaches and marshes. They are critical habitats for hundreds of species of fish and other aquatic life. Migratory water birds use the areas for resting and feeding.

### Recreation

Water is a great playground for us all. The scenic and recreational values of our waters are reasons many people choose to live where they do. Visitors are drawn to water activities such as swimming, fishing, boating and picnicking.

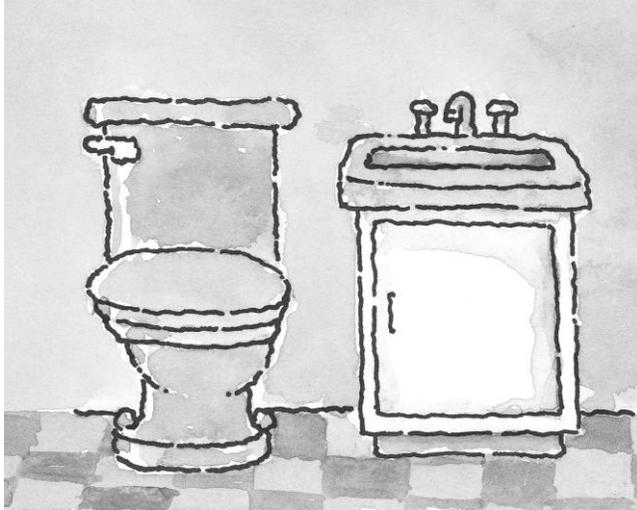
### Health

If it is not properly cleaned, water can carry disease. Since we live, work and play so close to water, harmful bacteria have to be removed to make water safe.

## Down the Drain

All of the clean water that comes into your house by one set of pipes leaves your house by another set of pipes; clean water becomes wastewater. Wastewater comes from houses, schools, businesses, industry, and storm runoff. In San Antonio, wastewater leaves these locations through gravitational forces and flows through thousands of miles of underground sewer lines following the natural topography of watersheds. SAWS uses four local watersheds

(Central/Olmos Creek/San Antonio River, Leon Creek, Salado Creek and Medio Creek) as natural transport mechanisms for its wastewater distribution system. Finally, the wastewater reaches one of three wastewater treatment facilities located in south and west Bexar County and the water recycling process then begins.



### **Water Can Be Recycled**

With the scarcity of water in some parts of the U.S. and with water conservation being so important, the reuse of treated wastewater is becoming more important. No, you don't have to worry about your drinking water at home coming right from a sewage-treatment plant. But treated wastewater is being used for certain purposes throughout Bexar County such as watering golf courses and landscaping alongside public roads. Some industries, such as power-generation plants can use recycled wastewater. A lot of water is needed to cool power-generation

equipment. Using wastewater for this purpose means that the facility won't have to use higher-quality water that is best used somewhere else.

### **Flush Responsibly!**

What you flush or pour down your drain affects the rivers, lakes and coastal waters in our community. Wastewater treatment facilities are designed to treat organic materials, not hazardous chemicals. Don't flush household products such as cleansers, beauty products, medicine, auto fluids, paint, and lawn care products down the drain. Properly dispose of them at a household hazardous waste facility. Dispose of household grease (meat fats, lard, cooking oil, shortening, butter and margarine, etc) diapers, condoms, and personal hygiene products in the garbage can. These materials can clog pipes and could cause raw sewage to overflow in your home or in public areas.