



# THE ENDEAVOR

A PUBLICATION OF THE STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

VOLUME X, NUMBER 2

SERVING EL CERRITO, KENSINGTON, AND RICHMOND ANNEX

SUMMER 2002

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## MISSION STATEMENT OF THE STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT

It shall be the mission of the Stege Sanitary District to plan and operate a safe, efficient, and economical wastewater collection and transfer system for the present and future customers of the District.

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## The Stege Collection Crew

**D**o you know these men? Look closely. You may have seen them at a busy intersection cleaning out a sewer main. Maybe they showed up at your front door when you called with a sewer problem, even late at night. Maybe you saw them in a neighbor's backyard working on a main that ran through an easement.

The men are Fred Bondoc, John Gerletti, and Quincy McCall. They make up the Stege Sanitary District's collection crew. It's their job to see to it that wastewater in the District is collected in a safe and efficient manner. The crew

is responsible for maintaining the 158 miles of sewer pipes that run through Stege. That includes regular cleaning and upkeep of the sewer lines and responding to service calls as they arise – even those that occur late at night or very early in the morning. On a rotating basis, two of the crew is always on-call, 24-hours a day.

The truck they are standing in front of is called a rodder. You could think of the truck as a monster rotor-router. Like its much smaller cousin that contractors use to clean out laterals, the rodder cleans sewer lines of tree roots and debris; it just does it on a massive scale in sewer mains that are up to 24-inches in diameter. Another type of cleaning equipment used by the crew is a hydro-jetter. The jetter blasts sewer main walls clean of accumulated grease and debris by using high-pressure jets of water.

While there are no alligators in the sewers, there are lots of other critters, including rodents, snakes, and black widow spiders. Rather than being repelled by these creatures, the crew is actually

pleased to see them in an area where they will be working. Their presence generally means the area is free of toxic gas. Hydrogen sulfide, carbon dioxide, and methane can build up to lethal levels in the sewer. Before venturing down a manhole, one of the team checks the air content using a gas detector. Fans are brought in to vent the area if conditions are found to be unsafe and the air is resampled until it is safe to proceed.

False teeth and small toys are among the objects most commonly flushed down toilets that end up in the sewer lines. Although the crew has occasionally responded to desperate calls to try to locate a diamond ring that accidentally got washed away, they've never found one. Should you ever find yourself in the situation of having lost something valuable down the drain or toilet, don't panic. If you haven't run any more water, the item



*Fred Bondoc, John Gerletti, and Quincy McCall, the Stege collection crew.*



*A member of the collection crew checks for sewer gas.*

*Continued on page 4*

## What Makes a Special District Special?

The Stege Sanitary District is a special district serving the communities of El Cerrito, Kensington, and Richmond Annex. It provides one service to its customers, the residents and businesses in those communities – it collects and transports wastewater to the EBMUD wastewater treatment facility in Oakland.

But just what is a special district? Simply stated, a special district is any government agency that is established under California law to provide specific services to a particular geographical area. These services might include mosquito abatement, closed captioned television, fire protection, or, as in the case of Stege, wastewater collection. School districts and redevelopment agencies are not considered special districts. There are approximately 3,400 special districts in California, of which 76 are sanitary districts. Like all special districts, Stege is distinguished by the following characteristics:

1. It is a form of government in that it can enter into contracts, employ workers, acquire real estate through purchase or eminent domain, adopt a seal, and charge for its services. It must also follow state laws that pertain to public meetings, bonded debt, record keeping, and elections.
2. It is governed by an elected board of directors. Like most special districts, the board consists of five members.
3. It provides services and maintains facilities.
4. It has definite boundaries.

The Stege Sanitary District is a *single function district* in that it provides a single service; it is an *enterprise district* in that it charges customers for its services; and it is an *independent district* as it has its own elected board. Like most other larger independent districts, Stege also employs a professional manager to assist its board members. The governing board adopts broad policies that the general manager carries out.

The first special district to be established in California was the Turlock Irrigation District in 1887. The Stege Sanitary District was established in 1923 and reorganized under the Sanitary District Act of 1923, making it one of the oldest in California.

## Trenchless Technology

Stege Sanitary District has made extensive use of “trenchless technology” in its construction projects in recent years. What exactly is trenchless construction or technology?

Prior to the 1980s, the replacement and rehabilitation of sanitary sewers was primarily limited to traditional open cut dig and replacement construction. In this open cut construction, a trench is cut along the entire length of the pipe to be replaced. The result was construction projects that could be disruptive to traffic, were often detrimental to other utility lines near sewers, and were often disruptive and destructive to landscaping and lawns. Trenchless construction practices enable sewer rehabilitation and replacement to be accomplished with significantly less impact on traffic and private property.

The two primary types of trenchless construction used by Stege are called sliplining and pipe bursting. In sliplining, a continuous section of smaller polyethylene (a type of plastic) pipe is pulled into the existing sewer. This provides a new sewer without the amount of excavation needed for traditional open cut construction.

Pipe bursting also places polyethylene pipe in place of the old sewer. In this method, a continuous section of polyethylene pipe is pulled into the place of the existing sewer, similar to sliplining. The difference is that the pipe is pulled behind something called a “bursting head.” This bursting head breaks the existing sewer line and forces it outward into the surrounding soil, and the new polyethylene pipe, which is the same size or larger, immediately follows the head and then occupies the space of the old sewer.

There is still some excavation that is needed in trenchless construction. An entry and exit pit is required at the ends of the sewer lines that are replaced, and existing manholes are often used when possible to minimize this excavation.

Continuous pipe is easier for the District to maintain than traditional clay pipe that has joints every few feet. Over time, roots are able to invade the joints in clay pipes, sometimes causing breaks and obstruction of sewage flow in the lines. This can lead to sluggish, slow flow of sewage, even causing sewage overflows in extreme cases. So, trenchless construction provides a benefit to maintenance and the environment as well as providing a construction method that is less disruptive to the public and property.

*A sewer is being sliplined through a much smaller opening than would be required with older methods of open-cut construction.*



# Sewer Easements

Over 28% of the Stege Sanitary District's 158 miles of sewer lines are located on private property in sewer easements or reserves that were established when Kensington, El Cerrito, and the Richmond Annex were subdivided.

Homeowners may have a sewer line on their property and not know it. In the past, developers often failed to properly record the easement to the property title. These easements, therefore, may show up in a title search.

It is vital that the District maintain access to all sewer lines.

Property owners who are unaware of sewer easements on their property may now be restricting District access and use of the sewer for maintenance and repair.

In an effort to correct this situation, the District has adopted Ordinance 1793-0602. This regulation establishes three classes of encroachment. From least to most severe, these are:

- Class 1 – *Minor interference with access.* This includes paving stones, flower beds, and lawns.
- Class 2 – *Significant interference that is removable.* Portable tool and storage sheds, driveways, gates, and fences are examples of this class of encroachment.
- Class 3 – *Significant interference that is not easily removed.* This class includes permanent structures such as buildings, garages, swimming pools, retaining walls, and trees.

It is vital that the District maintain access to all sewer lines. Class 1 encroachments that do not interfere with the District access and use of the easement area are allowed. Class 2 and Class 3 encroachments are prohibited. The District is presently developing a permitting process so that existing Class 2 and Class 3 encroachments may be allowed to continue under certain conditions until the earliest time that the violation can be eliminated.

To find out if you have a sewer easement on your property, call the District at (510) 524-4667, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

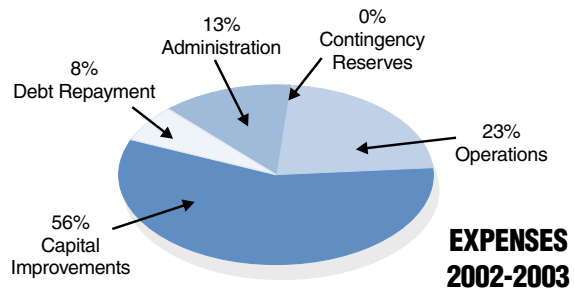
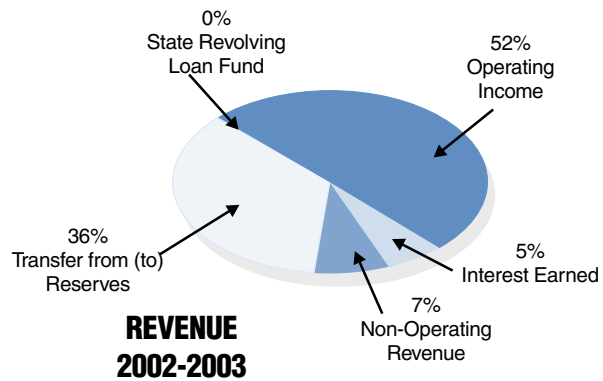
## YOUR MONEY AT WORK ON THE COLLECTION SYSTEM 2002-2003 BUDGET

### REVENUE

Non Operating Income	\$203,000
Operating Income	\$1,626,000
Interest Earned	\$175,000
Transfer from/(to) Reserves	\$1,332,636
State Revolving Loan Fund	\$0
	<b>\$3,336,636</b>

### EXPENSES

Operations	\$774,033
Capital Improvements	\$1,850,300
Debt Repayment	\$273,250
Contingency Reserve	\$0
Administration	\$439,053
	<b>\$3,336,636</b>



The District adheres to an investment policy for reserve funds that complies with state statutes and stipulates safety, liquidity, and yield as the order of investment objectives. All currently invested funds are with the State Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF).



**STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT**

7500 Schmidt Lane P.O. Box 537  
El Cerrito, CA 94530-0537 (510) 524-4667

**PRSRT STD**  
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**THE STEGE COLLECTION CREW**  
*continued from page 1*

is probably still in the trap under the sink or toilet. Even if it's not, it's probably still in your household plumbing. A contractor with a video camera may be able to locate it for you.

Although most wastewater problems that homeowners and businesses face are caused by internal plumbing or a clogged lateral, the District encourages customers to call if they experience a sewer backup. Often the problem can be diagnosed over the phone. If there is any question, the collection crew will come to your site to investigate and if the problem is in the District's sewer line, they will take the necessary emergency actions.

As a Stege customer, here are some ways you can help the collection crew do its job:

1. Cleaning and repairing sewer mains often involves working in the middle of busy streets. When you see the District truck and orange cones, please slow down and drive carefully through the area.
2. Twenty-eight percent of the sewer collection pipes in the District run through easements on private property. If you have such an easement, please remember to keep access to the manhole covers free of obstructions. Permanent structures, trees, and debris storage are among the things prohibited on any portion of the easement.
3. The collection crew will inform homeowners if they need access to perform routine maintenance on a line that runs through the homeowner's property. Please help them by keeping pets indoors on those days.

Helping homeowners is what Fred, John, and Quincy like best about their jobs. Next time you see them, wave, or maybe even tell them how much you appreciate the vital job they are doing.

**July 4th Celebration**



As it has for many years, the District joined El Cerrito in honoring our country's independence at its July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration. The event was held at the community center on Moeser Lane from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. The Stege Board of Directors were on hand to meet residents and answer questions about the District. If you missed us this year, be sure to stop by next year.

**Learn More About Wastewater Treatment**

While Stege is responsible for wastewater collection and transport for its customers, the actual treatment of the wastewater and release of the treated water is the responsibility of the East Bay Municipal Utility District's treatment plant in Oakland. EBMUD conducts group and school tours of its facility, as well as publishing material on this fascinating process. To learn more, visit [www.ebmud.com](http://www.ebmud.com) or call (510) 287-0138.

**How to Contact Stege**

- By phone: (510) 524-4667
- By mail: Stege Sanitary District  
7500 Schmidt Lane, PO Box 537  
El Cerrito, CA 94530-0537
- By email: [Staff@StegeSD.dst.ca.us](mailto:Staff@StegeSD.dst.ca.us)

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