



THE ENDEAVOR

A PUBLICATION OF THE STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

VOLUME XVIII NUMBER 1

SERVING EL CERRITO, KENSINGTON, AND RICHMOND ANNEX

WINTER 2010

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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.

INSIDE

- Your Toilet Is Not a Trash Can 2
- Backflow Prevention Device 2
- How to Contact Stege . 2
- Spotlight n Service Dennis Wright 3
- KIDS for the Bay..... 3
- Stege Board of Directors 3
- New Stege Facility Nears Completion..... 4
- Holiday Toy Drive 4
- Memorial Tree..... 4

EPA Issues New Environmental Requirements

Over the past 20 years, Stege has significantly reduced the number of sewage overflows in its system and continues to aggressively pursue a program of replacing old and cracked sewer mains. In addition, an ordinance in place since 2005 requires homeowners to certify the good condition of their home's lateral before sale of the property. All these measures have contributed to the increased health and water quality of San Francisco Bay. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recent interpretation of the Clean Water Act requires even more of the District.

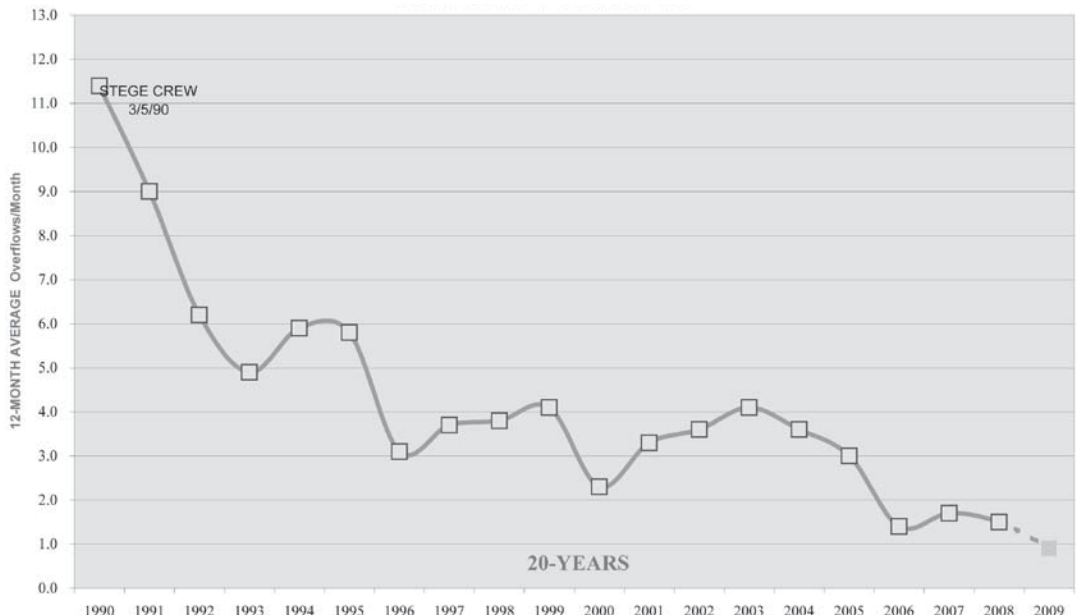
During periods of heavy rain, the volume of water in the District's system can swell to ten times its normal flow. While some of this increase is due to downspouts that have been illegally connected to the wastewater system,

much of the water comes from infiltration into old mains and pipes. The District is one of the oldest in the state and its hilly contours and seismic activity make its 150 miles of sewer pipe particularly vulnerable to cracking.

Since the Point Isabel wet weather station can no longer be called on during heavy rain to process and discharge treated wastewater into the Bay, the District needs to accelerate its sewer line rehabilitation program. Stege is working closely with EPA to be sure the agency's requirements are met.

A rate increase of \$4 to \$5 a month may be necessary to meet these goals. Stege sewer service rates remain one of the lowest in the East Bay Municipal Utility District and Stege is committed to providing its customer with cost-effective and efficient service.

Stege Sanitary District Main Overflows— 20 Year History



Your Toilet Is Not a Trash Can

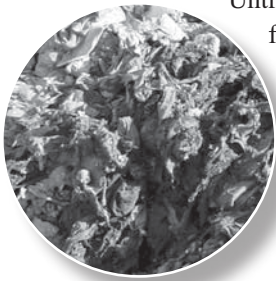
Baby wipes and handi-wipes, towellets for personal hygiene and for dusting furniture, disinfecting wipes and polishing cloths—the list goes on and on. The one thing all these items have in common is that they are “disposable.” Some of them are even labeled “flushable.” There is one more thing they have in common: None of them belong in your toilet.

Unlike toilet paper, which disintegrates in water, disposable wipes are designed not to fall apart in your hand. Flushed down the toilet, they retain their form and accumulate in the sewer mains where they sink to the bottom and lodge against pipe joints, backing up wastewater that flows behind them. At treatment plants, wipes can clog pumps and other machinery. Even dental floss is a problem because it is incredibly strong and can bind smaller clogs together, making even bigger blockages.

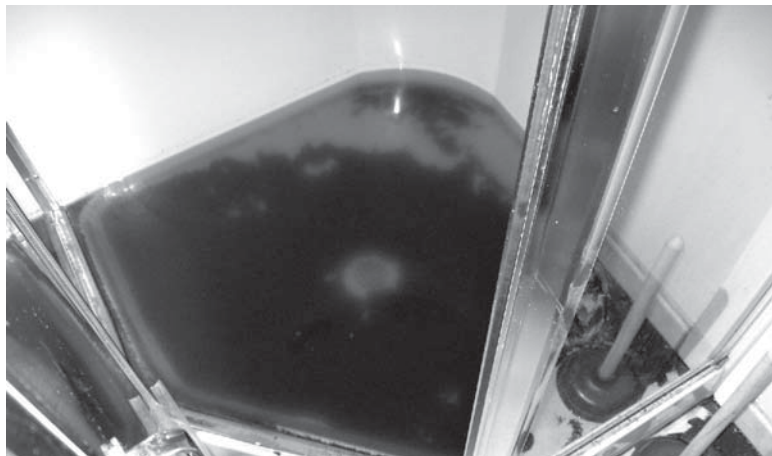
Disposable cloths are a leading cause of sewer overflows in Stege.

Untreated wastewater that spills out of manholes can flow into storm drains and creeks, where it can contaminate groundwater and the Bay. Sewage that backs up into houses is a huge mess that can cost thousands of dollars to clean up.

Residential laterals, being much smaller in diameter than sewer mains, are easily blocked by disposable cloths.



“Disposable” wipes that are flushed down the toilet (above) can clog sewer mains and home laterals, causing sewer backflows into homes (below). A backflow prevention device prevents such backflows into homes.



Backflow Prevention Device

Raw sewage backing up through bathtubs, showers, drains, and toilets into your home is something no homeowner wants to see. But it can happen, and when it does the mess and expense to cleanup, disinfect, and repair the damage is huge.

Backflows can happen if the home’s sewer lateral is not far enough above the rim of the nearest upstream sewer manhole and there is an extraordinarily high volume of water in the main, or if there is a blockage downstream that forces sewage back upstream.

Luckily, there is a way to prevent a sewer backflow from entering your home. A backflow prevention device (BPD) provides an emergency escape path should wastewater back up into your home’s lateral. If a backflow occurs, sewage will flow out the BPD outside your home and not come up the drains into your home.

A backflow prevention device is installed on your lateral. Stege requires such devices on all new buildings, on laterals that have been repaired or replaced, and on existing buildings that have drain outlets 12” or less above the rim of the next upstream manhole. If you are unsure if you have or need a backflow prevention device, call Stege for a free inspection of your system. Installing a device requires a permit, which is available at the District’s office on Schmidt Lane in El Cerrito. Homeowners may install the device themselves or use a contractor to do the work. A list of approved contractors is available on the District’s website, www.stegesd.dst.ca.us.

How to Contact Stege

Phone:

(510) 524-4668
(510) 524-4667 (after hours)

Mail:

Stege Sanitary District
7500 Schmidt Lane
El Cerrito, CA 94530-0537

Email:

staff@stegesd.dst.ca.us

Web:

www.stegesd.dst.ca.us



SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE

Spotlight on Service Dennis Wright

Seven months ago, Dennis Wright became Stege's newest wastewater collection worker. As such, Dennis is part of a crew that maintains more than 150 miles of sewer lines in the Stege Sanitary District. That includes regular cleaning and upkeep of the lines. Some jobs are high-tech, such as using a remotely controlled video camera to look for roots and grease that might clog the lines. The camera is also used to assess the general



health of the sewers. Every day, 3,000 feet of line is inspected. Lately, "disposable" wipes have become a particular clogging problem. A giant rodder and hydro-jetter are used to clear and clean the sewer mains from the street. But, sometimes a low-tech, thorough cleaning job that can only be done by hand is called for. Here, Dennis and the other members of the crew go down into the sewers to clear and clean the mains, using brushes and other hand tools. Toxic gasses, such as methane, carbon dioxide, and hydrogen sulfide are always potential problems that need to be checked for before venturing down into a main.

Before coming to work for Stege, Dennis worked for Berkeley Cement. He likes working for Stege because of the great people he works with every day and because of the sense of accomplishment he gets helping the environment. He has already attained his Collection Worker Grade 1 Certificate, a test he passed on his first try, and is studying for his Grade 2 Certificate. He sees staying with Stege until he retires.

Both Dennis and his wife were born and raised in Richmond. They continue to live in Richmond with their two sons. In his spare time, Dennis likes to ride motorcycles.



Thanks to a grant from Stege, students in Kensington Elementary School's fourth grade classes are learning important lessons about their local watershed and the environment. Both fourth grade classes are participating in the Watershed Action Program developed by KIDS for the Bay, a non-profit organization that collaborates with teachers to inspire environmental awareness in children and cultivate a life-long love of learning.

In addition to classroom lessons, the classes will visit the San Francisco Bay shoreline to explore first hand the important plants, animals, and aquatic invertebrates that inhabit the Bay. Then, the students will participate in an environmental action project, which may include a cleanup project, testing Bay water for pollutants, planting native plants and wildflowers, or other another project that connects students to their watershed. The fourth grade students at Kensington Elementary School will also receive information about the proper use of their home sewer system.

Training materials provided by the grant will allow the teachers to successfully teach the Watershed Action Program to each new class for years to come.

More information on KIDS for the Bay and the Watershed Action Program may be found at www.kidsforthebay.org.

Stege Board of Directors

The Stege Board of Directors consists of five members, who are elected at-large from the communities served by the Stege Sanitary District—El Cerrito, Kensington, and Richmond annex—and serve four-year terms. Elections are held in November.

The Board meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, starting at 7:00 pm at the District office on Schmidt Lane. Meetings often go to 11:00 pm or later.

In addition to setting District policy, rules, and regulations the Board is responsible for approving all major contracts and expenditures, creating and amending ordinances, and establishing a rate schedule. Once a year, in February or March, the Board meets for a full day to discuss long-range planning. They also represent to District at professional and governmental meetings.

Board agendas are posted on the District website, www.steged.dst.ca.us, before the meeting and minutes are posted once they are approved. The public is invited to attend Board meetings. You don't need to stay until 11:00 pm.



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New Stege Facility Nears Completion

Cleaning and grading of the parcel of land acquired by Stege through a land swap with the City of El Cerrito began earlier this year. Now, the construction of the District's new headquarters and maintenance yard is nearing completion. When finished, the new building, which replaces the one built in 1959, will be optimized for lighting, heating, and water efficiency. Materials used in construction incorporated recycled content and were chosen for their low-emitting qualities. Landscaping will be water-efficient.

Repairing and upgrading the old building would have cost almost as much as the new building. The cost of the building will be covered entirely by reserve funds. There will be no rate increase for this project.

Construction should be complete by the end of February.



August, 2009



October, 2009



November, 2009



December, 2009

Holiday Toy Drive

Each Christmas, Stege collects new toys to donate to the El Cerrito and Richmond firefighters' holiday toy campaign. Starting after Thanksgiving through the week before Christmas, new toys and checks can be dropped off at the District office on Schmidt Lane.



Memorial Tree

Art Schroeder, who died November 3, 2006 at age 99, will long be remembered as a tireless champion of the underserved and a member of the Stege Sanitary District Board of Directors for 15 years.

Now the world has another way to remember Art. In November, members of Art's family scattered ashes and planted a tree in a memorial grove on a hillside across the street from Stege's new office. The planting was attended by Art's family and members of the community Art served for so many years.

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