



City of Morro Bay
Public Services Department
955 Shasta Avenue
Morro Bay, CA 93442

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Water and Wastewater News

City of Morro Bay Public Services Department
955 Shasta Avenue

September, 2007
www.morro-bay.ca.us

Water Conservation Tips

- Use spring-loaded hose nozzles outside
- Don't hose down drive-ways or walkways
- Reduce irrigation, use drip systems and drought-tolerant plantings or, even better, install xeriscape!
- Take shorter showers (you too, teenagers!)
- Run only full loads in your dishwasher and washing machine
- Turn off the water while brushing teeth and shaving

Who to Call

Ever wondered who to ask for at Public Services to get your Water and Wastewater questions answered? Here's your guide to Public Services Department Utility Management Staff.

Director

Bruce Ambo

Utilities/Capital Projects

Bill Boucher

Dylan Wade

Kimberly Peebles

Water System

Alex Kuchenmeister

Wastewater Collections

Jim Hayes

Wastewater Treatment

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Water Billing

Bonnie Johnson

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State Water Shutdown and Nitrate Water Quality Update

Water conservation is as important now as ever! This year's annual State Water Project maintenance shutdown is scheduled for November 4 thru 18. During this period, we will be relying upon both the local groundwater and our Desalination Plant to meet the community water demands.

As we saw last year, our groundwater currently has high levels of nitrate. Since last November we have been closely monitoring the nitrate levels in our groundwater to determine which individual wells will be suitable for use this year.

To avoid a recurrence of last year's nitrate problem, during this year's shutdown we will be operating our Desalination Plant and the State Water Project will deliver us water from short-term storage. The remainder of community water will come from the local wells.

Why should I be concerned about nitrates?

High levels of nitrates in drinking water poses a significant health risk to consumers, especially infants and pregnant women, by reducing the blood's ability to carry oxygen.

The maximum level of nitrate allowable in drinking water is 45 milligrams per liter (mg/l). Last November we experienced lev-

els as high as 49 mg/l for several days.

What if the water supply has a problem like last year?

We have developed a Nitrate Notification Plan to provide both written and telephone notification, along with press releases to promptly inform the community in the event of a problem.

What I can do to reduce nitrate levels in my home or business?

Nitrate can be removed from water by reverse osmosis. Many under-the-counter kitchen drinking water units and water vending machines use this method and have been proven to be very effective. **Important! Boiling water does not work and can actually make the problem worse!**

What is the City doing to solve the nitrate contamination?

We have commissioned an analysis of the nitrate issue to determine the magnitude and source of the problem. This analysis is scheduled to be completed in October.

Once the analysis is complete, steps for solving the problem will begin. Groundwater cleanup will not be a fast process, likely taking years to accomplish.

Water Supply Challenges for 2008 and Beyond

Recent court decisions on State Water Project environmental issues and lack of rain and snow have raised questions as to the reliability of Morro Bay's water supply.

About 75% of our current drinking water supply comes from the State Water Project, a statewide system that extracts water from the Sacramento River Delta and

serves about 25 million Californians daily.

The climatic and legal issues may result in State Water deliveries as low as 8% of normal next year. Because of our drought buffer, this would mean our deliveries would be about one-half of normal.

This has led City staff to start steps to upgrade our Desalination Plant.

We are now working with the original designer of the facility and intend to be ready to commence work on the upgrade after this year's State Water shutdown period, if next year's State Water deliveries are to be significantly reduced.

Funds for this work are in the Water Fund reserve and no rate increase is planned.



Water and Wastewater News

September 2007



Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade News

The City and Cayucos Sanitary District adopted the Final Draft Facility Master Plan (FMP) prepared by Carollo Engineers at the September 12, 2007 Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) meeting. Based on Carollo's evaluation of the existing Wastewater Treatment Plant and the identified treatment alternatives contained in the FMP, the City and Sanitary District voted to upgrade the plant to tertiary treatment standards by March 2014. A copy of the FMP is available on the City web site (www.morro-bay.ca.us) under Public Services Department, Wastewater Treatment Plant Operations.

The selected upgrade project utilizes an oxidation ditch with filtration to produce a high quality tertiary effluent prior to discharge to the ocean.

The selected upgrade project also includes partial composting of the biosolids generated at the plant, to produce an exceptional quality soil amendment for use in the local community. The estimated cost of the upgrade project is \$28.1M (in June 2006 dollars).

City staff is currently proposing sewer rate increases necessary to fund the upgrade of the plant and the rehabilitation and repair of the sewer collection system. A public hearing is scheduled for November 13, 2007 for the consideration and adoption of the proposed sewer rate increases by the City Council. Staff is aggressively pursuing grant fund opportunities to help share the costs of the project, but to date only limited grant funding opportunities have been identified.

The next step in the upgrade project is the environmental review and permitting process. Staff anticipates beginning the environmental review process in early 2008.

Tours of the Wastewater Treatment Plant, located at 160 Atascadero Road, are available any working day and are highly encouraged to learn about the plant and what happens to the materials you put down your drain. Individuals, schools, and group tours of all sizes can be accommodated. Plant staff requests that you call for an appointment. If you would like more important information about the plant or have questions, please contact Bruce Keogh, Wastewater Division manager, at 772-6272.

We look forward to seeing you.

Wastewater Collection System News and Don'ts

NEWS

The City of Morro Bay is dedicated to protect the public health by efficiently transporting wastewater to the Wastewater Treatment Plant and treating wastewater in an environmentally and financially responsible manner.

We prepared a Collection System Master Plan, adopted by the City Council in 2006, that gave us a blueprint for the upgrade, repair and rehabilitation of the System to provide the ability to collect and deliver wastewater to the treatment plant long into the future.

Most of our Collection System is now over 50 years old and is showing it's age. The vast majority of the system is comprised of vitrified clay piping. A number of pipeline segments are now too small or have cracks, offsets and similar problems. Many of the problems can be attributed to land movement.

City staff is now proceeding with projects to replace two of our major lift stations: one along the Embarcadero next to the Bay and the other along South Bay Boulevard adjacent to the Morro Bay Estuary. These facilities are critical due to both their dependence upon aging pumping design and loca-

tions immediately adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitats.

We have started design and intend to complete the engineering plans and specifications and construct both replacement lift stations within the next calendar year. We anticipate these projects, while being quite expensive, will provide significantly improved assurance to the community that the risk of large raw sewage spills into the environment is reduced to the greatest extent possible.

The Master Plan's computer model identified a number of sewer pipeline segments as being currently overcapacity during highest wet weather flow conditions. The major pipe segment identified in this condition is along Main Street from Vashon to Atascadero Road and on Atascadero Road from Main Street to Park Street.

We have started design on the upgrade of this pipeline and plan to construct it in Fall 2008. This is also a costly project but it promises to reduce the risk of raw sewage spills.

Funding from increased sewer rates is needed to accomplish these goals of health and environmental protection.

DON'TS

Many people do not think much about what they flush down the toilet or pour down the drain. If they don't want it, they just flush it and forget it. This can often include a lot of materials that are not only bad for the Wastewater Collection System and Wastewater Treatment Plant but also potentially harm the local environment we all treasure so much.

Some of the materials that cause problems include grease, oil, dental floss, cloth, baby wipes, rubber gloves and various medical wastes. These materials can cause blockages in lines or clog lift station pumps, leading to spills of raw sewage into the environment.

Other materials such as unused medicine, cat litter, photo chemicals, and solvents will flow through the Collection System but can interfere with the Treatment Plant processes and possibly result in unsuitable materials entering the ocean, contacting sensitive animals and plants.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. These materials can be properly disposed of in other ways. If you have questions, please contact us.