

THE HERON

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District

Fall 2016

AVOID WASTING YOUR MONEY! **Always Get Three Quotes Before Performing Work**

Many homes in our District are more than 50 years old and the sewer laterals (the privately owned portion of the sewer pipe that connects your home to the main public sewer line) have likely never been replaced or periodically inspected. It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain this portion of the sewer line in good condition. Over time, these pipes age and crack or may have shifted out of place. Deteriorated laterals are susceptible to root intrusion, leak raw sewage into the ground and allow rainwater to enter, which may overload the sewer system.



How do I know if my sewer lateral needs repair?

If you are experiencing frequent backups, slow flowing drains, gurgling sounds from the toilet bowl, notice sewage odor, or have a sewer spill your lateral may need attention. Also, if your home was built before 1970 and the lateral has never been replaced, it is probably in poor shape.

If there are trees, heavy underbrush, or shrubs nearby, root intrusion may be a problem as well. A plumber can determine the condition of your lateral and perform the necessary repair work.

Always Get Three Quotes!

Many plumbers provide free estimates for assessing the condition of your lateral by Closed Circuit Television Video (CCTV) examination. Should you find that you do need to repair or replace your sewer lateral, **always be sure to obtain three quotes!** While our Sewer Lateral

Assistance Program will assist you with funds to cover these costs, we have heard too many times from customers that the repair costs were excessive. Please make sure you get three quotes so you don't overpay!

The LGVSD Sewer Lateral Assistance Program was established to assist homeowners with the costs of inspecting and repairing their aging sewer laterals. We acknowledge that it can be expensive to repair or replace them and want to make it easier for property

owners to maintain these lines. The District's Assistance Program advances funds to customers at a low interest rate to help pay for needed sewer lateral repairs. Please help us maintain the lowest sewer overflow rates in Marin County. You can find more details and an application form at our website, www.lgvsd.org, or call the District at 415-472-1734.

Did I Cause a Sewer Overflow?

Be aware that what you put in the sink or toilet goes down the drain and into the sewer system and could cause a sewer overflow. Minimize using your kitchen garbage disposal and instead catch all scraps in a strainer and put them in a compost pile or your yard waste bin. Avoid pouring fats and oils down the drain as they build up in the sewers, causing restrictions and overflows. Instead, pour cooled grease into disposable containers and dispose of it in the garbage. Dry-wipe pots, pans and dishes before washing.

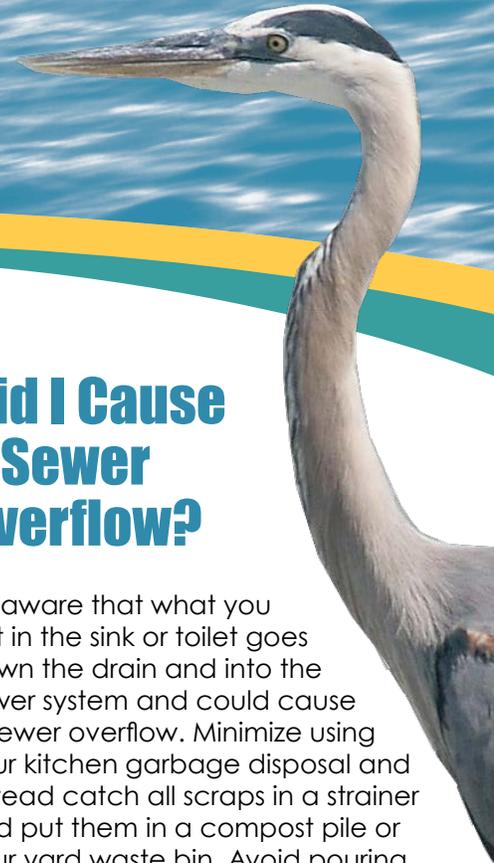
In the bathroom, avoid flushing solids such as sanitary napkins and "flushable" wipes. Baby and personal wipes should never be put in the toilet. Even though advertised as flushable, they cause a lot of problems in your own plumbing and an even greater problem in the District's sewer system and treatment plant. Simply remember flush only human waste and toilet paper.

Flush only human waste and toilet paper.
WipesClogPipes.com

These common household items, even if they say "flushable," should be put in the trash—NOT in the sink or toilet:

- Baby, personal, or household cleaning wipes
- Tampons, applicators, pads

Turn to "Down the Drain" on page 4



Keep Mosquitoes in Check Around Your Home

While mosquitoes are present year-round in Marin and Sonoma counties, vector control technicians are discovering an early emergence and high abundance of several species of mosquitoes this year. Vector control is any method to limit or eradicate the mammals, birds, insects or other arthropods (collectively called "vectors") which transmit disease pathogens. This article will focus on the most frequent type of vector control: mosquito abatement.



The high abundance of mosquitoes is being attributed to the extreme drought followed by flooding and warmer weather. There are numerous mosquito species being detected in high populations in the area. In addition to posing a threat to humans,

they pose a threat to birds, horses, dogs, cats and other wildlife. They can carry West Nile, Eastern equine encephalitis, Japanese encephalitis, and heartworm larvae.

The District works with the Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District (MSMVCD) to monitor the species of mosquitos in the District's wildlife ponds. MSMVSD personnel place surveillance traps at the ponds, apply biological controls such as mosquito fish, and apply microbial and chemical control when needed. The District has adjusted water levels in the wildlife ponds to eliminate breeding areas for the mosquitos.

You can keep an eye on mosquitoes around your house by following the guidelines outlined in this article.

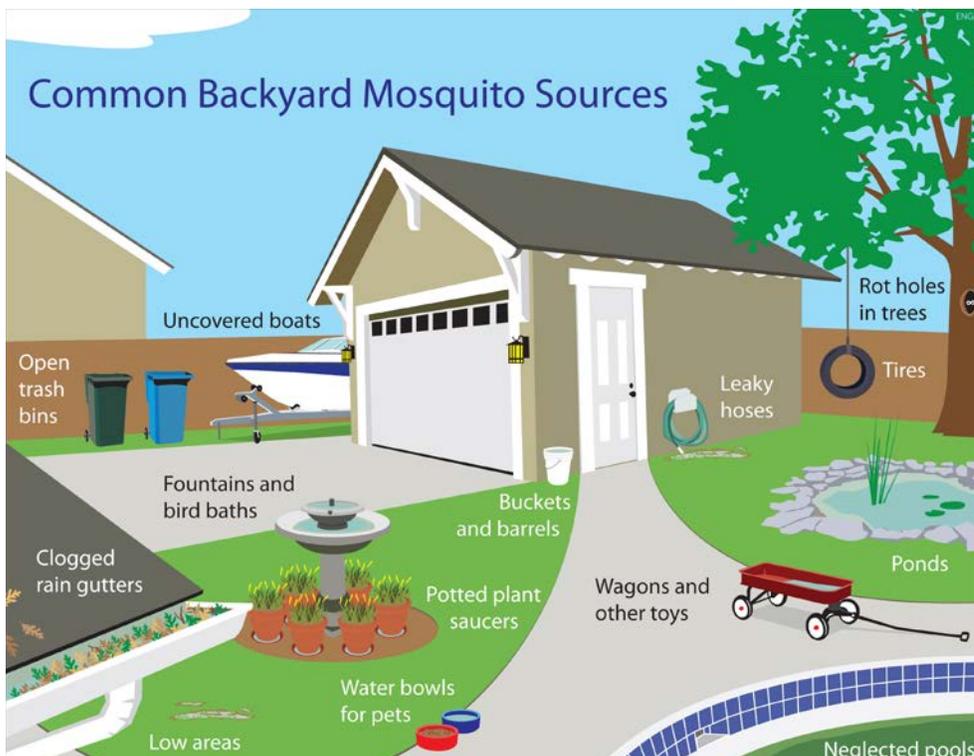
How to Detect if Your Dog has Heartworm

Some dogs can be infected for several years before symptoms develop, so early signs of heartworm disease may not be obvious. Heavily infected animals may exhibit a variety of symptoms that include, but are not limited to: coughing, lethargy, reduced appetite, and weight loss.



When a dog is bitten by an infected mosquito, blood is transferred and the larvae is introduced into the animal's bloodstream. The larvae will then molt into an adult. Adult worms usually reside in pulmonary arteries, can be 10-12 inches long and live 5-10 years. Numerous blood tests are available for detecting heartworm infections and annual testing by a veterinarian is recommended. But treatment can be expensive and sometimes additional testing and further treatment may be indicated.

Heartworm prevention is really the key. Heartworm prevention medication is available but the most effective method is to eliminate mosquitoes from your environment as best you can.



How to Minimize Mosquitoes in Your Yard

Anything that can hold water for more than five to seven days has the ability to produce mosquitoes. Maintain, manage or eliminate all types of standing water on a regular basis. Keep in mind that mosquitoes need as little as a 1/2 inch of water to complete their life cycle, therefore some areas may not be as obvious as others. To keep mosquitoes in check and prevent infection around your home, here's what you can do to protect yourself and your pets:

- Flip, dump or drain all temporary sources of standing water.
- Clean or hose off fountains and bird baths weekly.

Turn to "Keep Mosquitos in Check" on page 4



Miller Creek Dredging Begun

The Lower Miller Creek Channel Maintenance project is currently under construction. The dredging of Lower Miller Creek is being done to protect existing operations and facilities from the progressive accumulation of sediment in the reach, which is reducing discharge efficiencies along Miller Creek and at LGVSD outfalls. We do not want this problem to worsen as existing and planned road construction and bridge modifications on adjacent properties are reducing overland flow areas and concentrating flows in the creek channel. In addition, sea level rise will gradually raise the base level of Miller Creek, which will decrease the capacity for creek and outfall discharge. LGVSD recognizes that Miller Creek supports a population of federally listed Steelhead and adjacent wetland/marsh areas that potentially support other state and federally listed special status species. Therefore, project objectives include minimizing the extent and frequency of channel excavation/maintenance that may adversely impact habitats in the channel, while maximizing the extent and value of adjacent wetland.

The project will remove sediment that is threatening to block the treatment plant outfalls and improve flood flow conveyance in the Lower Miller Creek channel on LGVSD property. The channel work will occur over approximately 2,655 feet of Lower Miller Creek located adjacent to the LGVSD Treatment Plant and upstream of Reclamation Bridge. LGVSD has obtained permits from state and local agencies for this project.



River Otters Provide Student Biologists with Field Experience

By Megan Isadore, Executive Director, River Otter Ecology Project

Beginning in Fall 2015, 10 students in Biology and Environmental Science classes at San Rafael's Star Academy teamed up with The River Otter Ecology Project (ROEP) to conduct field investigations on the river otters inhabiting Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District Ponds. This study site, called LG01, is part of an ongoing investigation into the recovery and ecological niche of SF Bay Area river otters.

Star Academy provides individualized education for students with learning differences, and outdoor education has proved highly effective for this population. ROEP's program, "Hands on High School," offers young people the chance to learn in the field while participating in and contributing to an ecological research project.

Bordered by Miller Creek, St. Vincents lands and Hamilton Wetlands, Las Gallinas Reclamation Ponds are home, or a stopover point to many species of birds, fish, and other wildlife. The proximity to the Bay and wetlands gives river otters (who eat about 15-20% of their body weight each day to keep up with high energy needs) plenty of places to hunt for their favorite foods: crayfish, fish, insects, frogs and even water birds. In fact, the first time the students visited the site to check their cameras, they observed an otter catch and eat a coot...an exciting beginning!

The otters at Las Gallinas are not a new phenomenon; according to observational records, they've been seen in varying numbers since before ROEP began collecting observations in 2012. View our "Otter Spotter" map of citizen science reports from around the Bay Area at www.riverottterecology.org/maps-of-bay-area-sightings.html.

The students, along with their teacher, Christian Naventi (ROEP's Education Board of Directors leader) placed two motion-detector video cameras at Ponds 1 and 2 to discover otter population numbers. This is not an easy task since all river otters look similar, and there is no visual way to tell them apart. Observational and camera data have revealed three to four otters spending time at the ponds. A mother and two pups were seen often over the summer, and on occasion, four otters were seen together. Various group sizes appear from time to time, but the most common group is a mother with two nearly grown juveniles, probably close to adulthood now.



The Las Gallinas site is one of our first two sites on the SF Bay side of Marin County, out of 21 sites in Marin. The information we gain from these sites will help land managers, policy makers and agencies better understand the ecology of the wetlands, especially where it concerns restorations. The River Otter Ecology Project's overall goal is to support watershed conservation and wetland restoration. Our belief is that climate change resilience can only happen when every one of us participates.

Please see www.riverottterecology.org and [Facebook.com/BayAreaOtters](https://www.facebook.com/BayAreaOtters) for more information, videos and projects for children.

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Board Meetings are

held at 4:30 PM on
the second and fourth
Thursday of each month

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District Administration

Mark R. Williams, General Manager



Printed on recycled paper using soy-based inks.

“Down the Drain” continued...

- Bandages, band aids
- Condoms and their wrappers
- Teeth whitening strips
- Hair
- Cotton swabs, makeup pads
- Kitty litter
- Dental floss

All medicines should be disposed of safely, NOT down the drain. “National Prescription Take-Back Day” is coming up on Saturday, October 22, 2016. Walgreens and other drug stores will be participating, but not at all locations. You can get more information on “How to Dispose of Unused Medicines” from the FDA at this website: www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm

Hazardous substance such as paint, paint thinner, garden chemicals, batteries, fuels, and similar toxics must be disposed of at a certified hazardous waste site. There is one located at 565 Jacoby Street in San Rafael, for more information go to the website: www.marinhhw.com.

You can help us keep your sewer system operating at top efficiency and protect the environment by following the guidelines in this newsletter article.

“Keep Mosquitos in Check” continued...

- Don't overwater potted plants. Flush out saucers with a hose.
- Rinse water bowls for pets and fill with fresh water one to two times a week.
- Stock water troughs and ornamental ponds with mosquitofish.
- Call Marin/Sonoma Mosquito & Vector Control District if you have a mosquito-related problem that you cannot resolve on your own.

To learn more about mosquito control or other vector-borne diseases, visit the Marin/Sonoma Mosquito & Vector Control District website at www.msamosquito.com.



Mosquitoes need as little as 1/2 inch of water to complete their life cycle. Be sure to check for standing water in these locations: bucket, conduit box, barbecue grill.