

THE HERON

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District

Spring 2014

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District: 60 Years of Service to Marin Residents

The Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District (LGVSD) turned 60 in April of this year, marking six decades of providing sewer collection and treatment

services to residents in central Marin County. After 60 years, the District's facilities are aging. While a portion of the infrastructure has been upgraded in the past, the Board and staff continue to plan for the future

and stay abreast of the latest environmental regulations, treatment technologies and health issues.

How it All Started

Formation of the District was prompted by failing septic tanks — and the resultant health problems — in the older sections of Santa Venetia. Voters approved formation of the District on March 29, 1954 by a vote of 102-to-9. Incorporation of the District followed a week later and the original treatment plant was built the following year. Most of the original treatment processes and equipment are still being used. The LGVSD boundaries are concurrent with the 94903 zip code.



The Secondary Clarifier is used to remove floating solids and solids that have settled to the bottom. It no longer meets safety standards.

Major expansions of the treatment plant were undertaken in 1958, 1972 and 1984. The final effort cost \$15 million and took 18 months to complete.

Today, the District provides sewer service to a population of 30,000, which includes 10,000 residential and commercial customers. There are 105 miles of

sewer collection lines, 35 miles of pressure lines, 28 pump sewage stations, treatment plant, recycled water plant, and disposal facilities. The District treats an average of 3.6 million gallons per day. A portion of the treated effluent receives additional treatment at the new Recycled Water Facility, where the highly treated water is used for landscape irrigation and other beneficial uses. From November through May, some treated effluent is discharged into Miller Creek and eventually to San Pablo Bay. Treated effluent is also used for pasture irrigation and in the District's reclamation area, which features storage ponds and saltwater and wildlife marshes.

FDA Questions Effectiveness, Safety of Antibacterial Soaps

Potent chemicals contained in antibacterial soaps and toothpaste have come under more intense scrutiny by federal health officials, reinforcing the concerns of Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District officials that the compounds are difficult to remove from wastewater and pose a threat to public health and the environment.

In December of 2013 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced it was giving soap manufacturers one year to prove that the antibacterial products were safe or remove them from the products. Triclosan is a chemical commonly contained in antibacterial soaps and toothpastes and studies using animals have shown it alters hormone regulation and health officials fear the effects could be similar in humans.



According to the FDA, laboratory studies have raised the possibility that triclosan and triclocarbon contribute to making bacteria resistant to antibiotics. Such resistance can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of medical treatments. In addition, studies indicate the chemicals accumulate in soil

Keep Your Pool or Spa Clean — and Protect Waterways

Permit needed to drain pool to sanitary sewer

It can be a challenge to keep your swimming pool, spa or fountain free of algae during the summer months, but there are ways to accomplish that and still protect local waterways from potential harm.

Using copper algaecides to control algae can harm treatment plant biological organisms and aquatic life. The alternative is to control algae with proper chlorine levels and regular cleaning and to drain them properly.



Pools, spas and fountains should NOT be drained into a street gutter or storm drain. Gutters and storm drains empty directly to local waterways and eventually into the Bay. Swimming pools should be drained to the sanitary sewer system, which requires a permit from the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District. Spas and fountains may be drained to a landscaped area. If that is not possible, call the District to obtain a permit: (415) 472-1734.

Public Invited to Hearing on Preliminary Budget

The Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District Board of Directors will hold a Public Hearing on its 2014-15 Budget on Thursday, June 12th at 4:30 PM at the District's office, 300 Smith Ranch Rd, San Rafael, CA 94903. The public is invited to attend. A copy of the proposed budget is available on the District website: www.lgvsd.org.



What is a Property Easement and Do You Have One on Your Property?

A property easement is the right to use another person's land for a stated purpose and can involve a general or specific portion of the property. Cities, counties and utility districts maintain easements over property for the maintenance, repair and replacement of utility lines, such as sewer and water lines. An easement is part of a property owner's deed and a title search can alert you to the easement location. Easements are something that buyers should be aware of when purchasing property and are generally recorded with the local County Recorder. A buyer should carefully review the public records to make sure there are not restrictions on the use of the property that would affect their intended use. This is especially important if you are going to do remodeling or construct additions to the property.

What does this mean to you? If there is an easement on your property, you could have a sewer line, water line, manhole, or other utility in your yard. One should not assume that because an easement is not currently being used it will never be used. As long as an easement is part of your deed, there's always a possibility that the easement will be enforced.

A typical District sewer easement is 10 feet wide, but may vary in width depending on the particular location. Structures such as home

additions, sheds, fences, and retaining walls should never be built over an easement as it may be necessary to remove them to maintain or replace a sewer line. Manholes should never be buried because the District needs access to these manholes to clean sewer lines and to eliminate any blockage in the lines. Trees should not be planted directly above a sewer line because it not only jeopardizes the life of the sewer line with roots, but might have to be removed if rehabilitation of the sewer line is necessary and the tree is in the way.

The Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District maintains numerous property easements in order to maintain, repair and replace its sewer lines. It is imperative that we have access to the sewer lines and manholes that run through an easement. This could be in your backyard, your front yard or down the side of your house. While we will always knock on the door to announce ourselves, if no one is home when we are conducting routine maintenance, or we are experiencing an emergency, we do have the legal right to enter the backyard of an easement to perform our work.

If you are concerned whether there is an easement on your property, you can check with the County of Marin Recorder's office. If you have any additional questions, please call the District at (415) 472-1734.

Facilities Need Upgrading

Most equipment has been in continuous operation for 30-40 years and is unable to work in conjunction with new treatment technologies.

The Gravity Thickener is used to thicken sludge. There are no standby or redundant systems in the event of its failure.



The trickling filters are part of the biological treatment systems. There is insufficient treatment capacity and it is unable to meet new requirements.

District Wins Finance Award

For the second year in a row, the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by an agency and its management. The honor was given to the LGVSD's administration for their preparation an award-winning CAFR in 2012 and 13.

The CAFR was judged by an impartial panel to have met the high standards of the program, including demonstrating a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the CAFR.

"LGVSD Turns 60" continued from page 1...

The reclamation area includes 3.5 miles of public access trails along the shore of the storage pond and around the freshwater marsh. These attract a large variety of wildlife and migratory waterfowl.

Looking to the Future

In order to maintain the District's exemplary record for environmental and health safety, improvements are being planned to keep the facilities up-to-date and adapt to the changing nature of wastewater and its treatment. "While the District has made many improvements to our facilities, we must continue with these upgrades," said LGVSD General Manager Mark Williams. "With all the new regulations and discharge requirements, we have to continue to make improvements so we don't fall behind again."

In the past, many small utilities did

not keep up with maintenance and long-term planning was not considered a priority. "This was fairly common and many improvements that were needed fell under the category of deferred maintenance," said Williams. "Now we're playing catch-up, unfortunately."

In the planning stages for the wastewater treatment plant is an upgrade from the current biological trickling filters to a biological activated sludge system. "The trickling filters were a great technology for their time, but the technology is not sufficient to deal with the types of wastewater that we have to treat, with pharmaceuticals and other types of waste that are being generated," said Williams. "Activated sludge will provide better effluent quality."

During high flow events created by large storms, the system doesn't have the capacity to fully treat all

the wastewater flowing into the plant. A proposed storage system would accommodate the high flows and prevent spills. There are also ongoing maintenance needs for the system of collection lines and pump stations. New, stricter air quality regulations will require the District to improve generators at the plant and pump stations and other portable equipment.

The District's customers can help the effort, said Williams, "by supporting the agency's efforts to improve its facilities. And they can be careful about what they discharge." Items such as so-called disposable wipes and other cleaning products can wreak havoc with our treatment process and cause sewer spills. "Whatever customers put in the wastewater, we have to take out," he said. "It's much easier to not dispose of it in the first place than taking it out after the fact."

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Board of Directors

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Board Meetings are

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

ECRWSS – Postal Customer

District Administration

Mark R. Williams, General Manager



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"FDA Questions..." continued from page 1...

and groundwater. According to the New York Times, one study found the chemical in the breast milk of 97 percent of the women tested and the Centers for Disease Control have found the chemicals in the urine of 75 percent of Americans.

Regulators and health officials maintain there is no evidence that antibacterial soap with triclosan is any more effective than simply washing with warm water and regular soap. "No data exists to support their efficacy when used in such products or any need for them," according to the American Medical Association, "but increasing data now suggest a growing acquired resistance to these commonly used microbial agents."

Chemicals Defy Treatment

Triclosan is one of a growing number of chemicals that create problems for wastewater treatment facilities

because it cannot be entirely removed during the treatment process. LGVSD General Manager Mark Williams says "residents should consider alternatives to antibacterial soaps and other household products that contain triclosan."

Impacts to the Environment

"Ultimately, the technology that creates these chemical compounds is far more complex than the technology that is used to remove it," said Williams. "The removal costs are huge, and even with the best technology, some of these compounds are virtually impossible to remove. These levels are accumulating in our bodies and the environment." A recent article in the



S.F. Chronicle reported that levels of perfluorooctanesulfonic acid—once the primary ingredient in Scotchgard—have remained elevated in harbor seals in San Francisco Bay, even though this chemical has not been used for 12 years.

For the District, these compounds are "making it difficult for us to meet our discharge requirements and they pose a threat to the environment, wildlife and our waterways," said Williams.

What You Can Do to Help

The alternative to triclosan is to just use soap and warm water for regular hand washing. "You don't need any additives," said Katerina Capetanos, the Environmental Services Director for LGVSD. "Soap itself does the trick." She said the numerous chemicals and compounds consumers use "affect wastewater treatment, and its biological process. If we can't catch it and treat it, it gets back into the environment and people are affected by it again. It's much cheaper to stop it at the source. People can make good choices by buying things that don't have additives. I think they would rather buy toothpaste or soap without an additive than pay for costly treatment processes."

Public Hearing: Changes to Sewer Rate Methodology

The Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District will hold a public hearing on changes to the sewer rate methodology on June 5, 2014 at 6 p.m. in the Recycled Water Building at the District's treatment plant, 300 Smith Ranch Road, San Rafael, CA 94903. Proposed changes to the sewer rate methodology have been discussed at several public meetings and a study has been completed. The Board will take action on the proposed changes at the public hearing. To view the report, visit the District's website at www.lgvsd.org.