



Wells Sanitary District Newsletter

March 2023



ON-LINE BILL PAY COMING SOON

Paying your sewer bill will soon be quick and easy with the introduction of a new on-line bill payment system. The WSD team is working hard to replace our 20-year-old billing process with an updated, electronic system that offers:

- E-statements
- Text or email reminders
- Online payment, using credit/debit card, e-check, ACH, or PayPal.

We hope to launch the new system in late summer. You'll be hearing more in the coming months!

Teamwork highlights response to fire

Planning and strong partnerships are two of the many reasons the Wells Sanitary District has provided reliable service to customers for more than half a century. The importance of these partnerships was highlighted when a wintery mix hit the region in January, knocking out power to 24,000 homes and businesses in York County, including our treatment facility.

As designed, our standby generators kicked in, and all 10 pump stations were at full capacity—until a treatment facility generator caused a fire that damaged the roof.

The Wells Fire Department was on scene within minutes and quickly extinguished the fire. However, water coming through the roof damaged the generator and other electrical equipment in the room, temporarily shutting the facility down.

We activated our disaster response plan, and quickly contacted our community partners.

The Kennebunk-Kennebunkport-Wells Water District and the Ogunquit Sewer District each lent us portable generators. Their support was particularly valuable when the initial back-up generator we subsequently rented repeatedly failed. A-1 Environmental and Nest & Sons, Inc. began transporting our wastewater

to Ogunquit for treatment, averting a potential overflow problem while we addressed the electrical issues and began recovery efforts.

Electrical Installations, LLC, a partner for more than 20 years, was onsite within 90 minutes of the fire, working simultaneously with WSD Staff to hook up the borrowed generators and address the electrical damage and recovery. They were instrumental in getting our treatment facility back on line within 8 hours of the fire.

Damage to the room and its electrical equipment forced us to remain on



generator power for 10 days, as we began restoration efforts. The recovery plan calls for new windows, flooring, and ceiling tiles, as well as replacement of electrical components, such as a main breaker, generator, and other electrical components.

Additional thanks to first and early responders and local vendors.

Insurcom, Inc. removed debris from the generator room; and Board Up repaired the hole in the roof caused by the fire. Both were onsite the night of the fire.

Northeast Earth Mechanics removed the old generator and other equipment. And a special thank you to the Wells Fire and Police Departments for their quick response, as well as to the Fire Departments from Kennebunk, North Berwick, Ogunquit, and Sanford.



Drakes Island pipe replaced

A troublesome pipe that carried wastewater across Wells Harbor has been successfully replaced.

The pressurized sewer pipe, also called a force main, ran under the Webhannet River channel between the jetties from Drakes Island to the Eastern Shore parking lot at the end of Atlantic Avenue. Age, erosion, and boating strikes led to leaks and repeated repairs and re-anchoring efforts.

The 1,000-foot-long force main was replaced with two pipes of the same size. Work began in August, and the new 8-inch diameter pipes were operational by late September. The old force main was removed in October.

Damage leads to accelerated timeline

Early last year, WSD received regulatory approval to replace the aging pipe. Work was scheduled between October and March, to minimize potential impact on Piping Plovers in the area. However, unexpected issues with the pipe and its anchors led the District to move up the project.

The original line, installed in 1978, was placed well below the harbor floor, but a series of storms in 2018 had swept away much of the covering on the river floor. The erosion, combined with corrosion of some of the anchor hardware, allowed the line to float closer to the surface where it was struck twice by boats last summer, causing breaks

in the pipe. In addition, the repeated floating and resecuring of the line began to weaken the pipe, creating leaks.

The District and the regulatory agencies agreed that starting the work immediately was a priority. Our general contractor, Northeast Earth Mechanics, and their partner, Henniker Directional Drilling, were both able to accommodate the accelerated schedule.

While the original force main was placed by digging a trench, the new pipes were installed using directional drilling, a process that bores a path for the pipe under the river floor and then pulls the pipe through. It is better suited for underwater pipes and cables, with less environmental impact.

The project restores reliable wastewater removal, eliminating the risk of leaked wastewater seeping into the harbor and the associated costs of repairs and clean-up.

The plan was approved by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and other agencies, but was delayed for nearly a year by the pandemic.

The project's \$1.5 million cost was funded by the State Revolving Loan Program, administered through the Maine Municipal Bond Bank and Department of Environmental Protection.

Our Mission

To provide the highest quality wastewater collection and treatment services at the lowest possible cost to our customers, protecting human health, the environment, Wells beaches and marshes.

Our Vision

WSD strives to be diligent, customer-focused stewards of the environment, continuously improving in collecting, transporting, and treating wastewater.



To flush or not to flush?

Did you know that 99% of our pump station clogs are caused by items flushed down the drain? Flushing the wrong items can also clog your pipes, leading to messy back-ups and costly repairs.

Items that should never be flushed include baby wipes, Q-tips™, diapers, cloths, paper towels, feminine products, facial tissues, cotton balls, dental floss, hair, and – flushable wipes (WHICH ARE NOT FLUSHABLE!).

In addition, avoid flushing medications or potentially hazardous household materials (paint and harsh cleaning products, for example).

What can you flush? Remember the three Ps: Pee, Poop, and (Toilet) Paper.

When in doubt, throw it out, and don't flush it.