

# THE HERON

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District

Spring 2015

## District Continues to Address Aging Infrastructure, Changes in Wastewater Content, and New Regulations

**More must be done, but many important projects funded by prudent use of ratepayer funds**

When the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District (District) approved a series of sewer service charge

increases in 2009, those funds were earmarked to carry out a program of upgrades, improvements, modernization efforts, and general upgrades and repairs. That program was aimed at continuing to safeguard the public

health, protect the environment, and comply with increasingly stringent regulatory requirements.

Since then, much has been accomplished through the District's careful and practical use of that funding. While the work to maintain, upgrade, and improve our aging facilities must continue, and additional critical infrastructure needs must be funded, now is a good time to look back at a few of the key projects the District accomplished, thanks to you, the ratepayers:



*Interior of District's Recycled Water Plant*

### Updates to Primary Clarifiers, Treatment Plant

The District implemented important upgrades to its system of primary clarifiers which were constructed in 1955. These are the large, round "settling tanks" which use mechanical skimmers as a means of removing

suspended solids, and the pollutants embedded in those solids, from wastewater. Additionally, other aging facilities at the treatment plant were rehabilitated in order to maintain treatment quality and operational safety, and meet new regulations.

### Recycled Water Treatment Plant Built

In the interest of furthering environmental protection and efficient use of water resources, the District completed a new recycled water

## You Can Help Protect the Bay

**Avoid using products with Permethrin—found in over 1,400 pet and household pest control products.**

Permethrin is a toxic chemical commonly found in pet and household pest control products. It's often used as an insect repellent on landscaping, as a flea preventative treatment for pets, on humans to eradicate head lice or scabies, and for other similar uses. In fact permethrin is present in over 1,400 registered products, which may be liquid, powder, dust, aerosol, sprays, treated clothing, pet flea collars, and other flea control products.

This chemical is dangerously toxic to beneficial animals such as honeybees and aquatic life—and it's important for us all to take responsibility for helping keep it out of the environment and the bay.



### Avoid using products containing chemicals ending in "thrin"

Look at the product's list of active ingredients. Those ingredients ending in "thrin" belong to a class of pesticides that are a great threat

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treatment facility to provide the Hamilton area with recycled water for a variety of landscape irrigation uses. This readily-expandable facility, using state-of-the-art water treatment technologies, provides a reliable and drought-proof water supply, typically at a lower cost and with a smaller carbon footprint than many potable water sources.

**Sewer Pipeline System Improvement Projects**

It's an ongoing challenge to effectively maintain, repair, and replace the District's sewer pipeline system, much of which is 50 years old, or older. Over the last five years, the District has taken substantial steps to address problems with this aging infrastructure by rehabilitating sewer pipelines and enlarging undersized pipe underneath the streets and unpaved areas of the communities we serve. The District will continue to upgrade the sewer system to ensure safety and reliability, and to stay up-to-date with regulatory changes. The District has a substantially lower spill rate compared to the Bay Area and state averages.

**Pump Stations and Force Mains Upgrades**

The District's pump stations push sewage through pipelines called force mains, and of course both of those elements are critical links in the efficient, safe operation of the entire system. Force mains pose the largest sewer spill liability. In addition to equipping 28 pump stations with

up-to-date redundant alarms and level control systems, the District replaced a number of aging portions of force main, to help ensure continued, optimum operation. But more work is needed.

**Sewer Lateral Rehab Assistance Program**

This program was established to assist property owners with the costs of inspecting and repairing their aging sewer laterals (the privately-owned pipelines running from a property to the main sewer pipeline). Aging lateral lines can break, causing sewage spills, damaging the environment, and impacting public health—and they can be expensive to repair or replace. 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 lateral sewer line repairs.

**Reserves and Future Planning**

A portion of revenues was used to help the District build-up its emergency reserve fund, which is an important safeguard in case of an emergency which requires immediate repair or replacement of infrastructure. Reserve funds are available for extraordinary expenses, and to fund cash flow if needed. And finally, some revenues are used for planning the major capital and other projects that will be implemented as the next proposed five-year plan is developed, approved, and put into action.

The above list of projects illustrates how the District has delivered on its promises made in 2009 when it outlined work to be accomplished over the following years. It also reinforces that the District is a responsible, thoughtful, and prudent steward of the public funds with which it is entrusted.

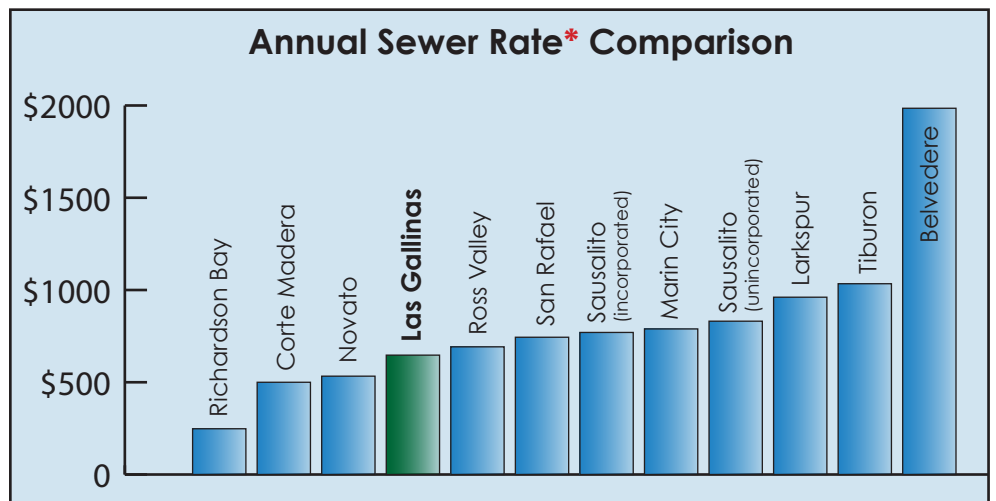


The District has replaced or repaired many pipelines serving the community.

**Keeping Rates Low**

The District's sewer rates are among the lowest in the region, and even with the proposed increases are expected to remain below average. The District's garbage collection service rates are the lowest in Marin County.

\*Agencies also receive property tax revenue to fund operations. These revenues are a significant source of funding and vary greatly among sewer districts and cities providing services.



# Next Phase of Critical Upgrades Requires Fee Increases

## Proposed annual increases for five years to fund priority projects

The District has a lengthy track record of excellent service to its customers, consistently low rates compared to other agencies, effective and safe operations, and a continuing commitment to protecting the environment. In order for this success to extend into the next decade and beyond, the District must continue to diligently repair, upgrade, and rehabilitate its systems.

The last five-year plan resulted in major improvements to our infrastructure and in other critical project areas. But the work is not done as the system continues to age, and upgrades must be made. Additional funding from a sewer service charge increase is required in order to ensure the environment is protected, high-quality and reliable services are provided, and increasing state and federal regulations are met.

In response to changes in the components of wastewater, aging facilities, and new regulations, the District will be proposing a series of increases in sewer service charges to be implemented each year for the next five years. The proposed increases will also affect "connection fees," which are the one-time fees paid by developers/builders of new houses/buildings. These fees represent new users' "fair share" of the capital costs which have been incurred to build out the sewer system to its present state. There will also be a proposed increase in residential sewer service charges (complete information on the proposed increases will be mailed to all District customers in early April, and will also be online at [www.lgvsd.org](http://www.lgvsd.org)).

There are five key areas where this additional ongoing funding will be applied:

### Sewer Pipeline Collection System

- Rehabilitate sewer pipelines and lower lateral pipelines. It costs approximately \$110 per foot to replace sewer pipe. The District has 105 miles (554,400 feet) of sewer pipe.
- Increase the capacity of sewer mains for wet weather events which result in high flows to the plant.
- The Terra Linda Sewer Trunk Capacity project will address wet weather capacity sewer overflows at the intersection of Manuel T. Freitas Parkway and Las Gallinas Avenue.
- Continued funding for the Sewer Lateral Rehab Assistance Program.

### Pump Stations and Force Mains

- Continued improvement and rehabilitation of pump stations and force mains.
- Rehabilitation of our 28 pump stations.

### Treatment Plant

- Upgrade secondary treatment process equipment with an energy efficient, modern activated sludge treatment process.
- Expand administration building to improve efficiency, functionality.
- Replace cogeneration system and add a vehicle biogas station (which will not result in additional charges to our rate payers).

### Reclamation Area

- Improve and increase maintenance of the District's Reclamation Area, including its levees and public trails.
- Maintenance of Miller Creek to protect District facilities from flooding.

### General Upgrades and Repairs

- Provide for proactive maintenance in all areas to avoid equipment failure, make emergency repairs, and replace vehicles and equipment.



## Tours, Workshops, and Public Hearing Scheduled

As the District considers sewer service charge increases, there are opportunities for its customers to comment and be part of the process, to learn about and better understand the District's activities, and gain knowledge about the proposed rates and what sorts of projects they'll fund. Please visit [www.lgvsd.org](http://www.lgvsd.org) for more details.

### March 12, 2015

- Public Tours of the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District Treatment Plant. *Learn about District services and the wastewater treatment process.*
- Community Workshop at the District's Recycled Water building. *Gain an understanding of how sewer service charges are utilized.*

### March 27, 2015

District Board workshop on the proposed 2015-16 budget. *Learn about the proposed budget and future spending on critical projects.*

### April 10, 2015

Official Notice of Proposed Rate Increase and notice of Public Hearing mailed to District customers.

### May 7, 2015

Meeting with Contractors/Builders to discuss connection fee proposals.

### May 28, 2015

Public Hearing for the Board to make final decision on proposed sewer rates and connection fees. *Hear more about proposed rate increases, address the Board with your comments.*

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www.lgvsd.org

**Board of Directors**

Megan Clark  
Rabi Elias  
Russell R. Greenfield  
Craig K. Murray  
Judy Schriebman

**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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*"Help Protect the Bay" continued from page 1...*

to water quality and highly toxic to aquatic insects and crustaceans.

**Do not dispose of permethrin down the drain**

When you put such chemicals down the drain, you are ultimately putting the portion not removed by our treatment plant into the bay. Such chemicals should be disposed of at a hazardous waste facility such as Marin Sanitary Service (visit [www.marinsanitary.com](http://www.marinsanitary.com) or call 415.485.6806 for information).

For a list of permethrin alternatives you can consider, please visit [www.ourwaterourworld.org](http://www.ourwaterourworld.org).



## “Wipe Out” Flushing of Personal Wipes!

### So-called “flushable” items cause damage and overflows

One of the many ways the makeup of wastewater has changed is the use of personal and cleaning wipes. Everyone learns at an early age not to put “un-flushable” items in the toilet. Lots of kids learn the hard way that when they try to flush those un-flushables, it creates a big mess! Not to mention the damage that such items can do to the sewer system.

What about those products which claim to be “flushable,” but really are not? For example, baby wipes and personal wipes. These are often advertised as being flushable, but the reality is that they cause a lot of difficulties in your own plumbing, in the District’s sewer system, and at the treatment plant.

Lately it seems that more and more of these so-called flushable items are caught in our sewer pipes or conveyed to the District’s treatment plant, where they have been known to damage expensive equipment. Please remember that ONLY toilet paper should be put into your toilet—anything else could very well cause an expensive problem.



Screens installed in 2006 were part of an over-\$4 million project to help protect the treatment plant from personal wipes.

These common household items, even if they say “flushable,” should be disposed of in the trash—NOT in the sink or toilet:

- Baby wipes, personal wipes, household cleaning wipes
- Tampons, applicators, pads
- Bandages, band aids
- Condoms and their wrappers
- Teeth whitening strips
- Hair
- Cotton swabs, makeup pads
- Kitty litter
- Dental floss

This is one way you can help keep the sewer system operating at top efficiency—simply remember that toilet paper is the only thing that you should put in the toilet.