

District Project Updates

Over the past several months, Coal Creek Utility District staff have been involved in two significant projects, including the installation of new Water Quality Sampling Stands (shown at right), as well as new water service and related connections to support 400 units in the first phase of the Avalon Bay development at Newcastle Commons, shown below:



Legislative Update

Given the lead pipe situation in Michigan, followed by news about lead pipe connectors here in Washington state, recent deliberations in our state's capitol seem hard to believe: Washington legislators are considering **eliminating** one of the primary funding sources dedicated to water and sewer infrastructure.

Known as the Public Works Trust Fund, this source has enabled over **\$2.8 billion** in infrastructure improvements since 1985, including multiple projects within the District's service area.

CCUD began using Public Works funding back in the 1990s to replace all of the District's old tar-wrapped steel and asbestos cement water pipes; more recently we used PWB funds for the Lake Boren Sanitary Sewer Lift Station project, enabling properties with private septic systems to connect to the District's system.

Because Public Works Trust funding comes with such a low interest rate, the District was able to construct significant utility infrastructure improvements, all while keeping the District's water and sewer service rates competitive.

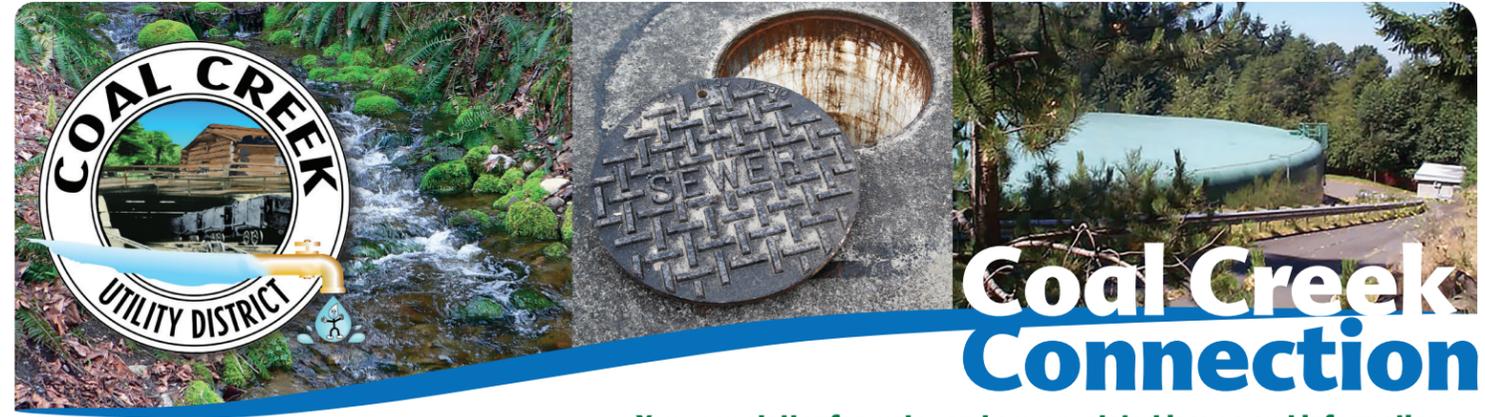
What caused our legislators' priorities to shift, even though the State's infrastructure is still in crisis? Two words: educational funding.

For the past seven years, legislators have been diverting Public Works Funds to balance the budget, relying on the "unseen and easily forgotten" factor of underground water and sewer infrastructure systems to remain ignored until an emergency.

We at Coal Creek Utility District strongly support education, and recognize the serious financial crisis our educational system is facing. The educational funding issue must be addressed. However, taking funding away from infrastructure is not wise or sustainable.

The safety of a school's water and sewer systems is just as critical to our children's future—especially when you consider the risk of a school's aging infrastructure during a major emergency event like an earthquake.

We believe both education and infrastructure are essential to the well-being of our children. We will continue to work with our State's legislators to preserve the Public Works Trust Fund—for the future of your children as well as your water quality.



Your newsletter for water and sewer-related issues and information serving Newcastle and the surrounding areas since 1959

Spring 2017

Commissioners' Overview...

Have your pipes been draining more slowly than usual this winter? With cold temperatures starting earlier and lasting longer, more of our customers have experienced slow draining or clogged pipe issues. Most homeowners assume it's due to foreign matter or tree roots obstructing the sewer lines, but there's another way that pipes can slow down or clog up during winter months... and it's not something the average homeowner ever thinks about: fats, oils, and grease ("FOG"). During the cold season, shortly after holiday meals have generated excess amounts of kitchen grease that is typically drained into the kitchen sink, freezing temperatures begin to solidify FOG further down the pipeline. The result? a very visible, smelly, and costly problem: backed up / clogged sewer lines. The problem can be even worse when combined with those "disposable" wipes (that are anything but). Find tips for preventing both problems inside this newsletter!

Inside This Issue:

- Preventing Clogged Pipes Due to Fats, Oils, and Grease
- Fix Those Leaks!
- Why Flushable and Disposable Wipes Are Anything But
- Project Updates
- Legislative Update

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Rescheduling Our Newsletter

Coal Creek Utility District has decided to switch from quarterly to three newsletters per year: 1) Spring, 2) Summer (which includes our Annual Water Quality / Consumer Confidence Report), and 3) Fall/Winter.



Got F.O.G.?

Tips, Myths, and Truths of Fats, Oils and Grease in Your Sewer System

During the holidays, that delicious roast turkey, rib roast, ham, or Christmas goose represents a hidden threat to your sewer—both on the residential side (your sewer pipes) as well as the District’s sanitary sewer mains. The threat? **FOG: Fats, Oils, and Grease.**



But the problem isn't just roasted meats. Gravy, sauces, salad dressings, cream soups (cream is a fat!), dips, butter, leftover whipped cream, milk, mayonnaise, and even shortening—many of these contain high amounts of FOG.

And FOG isn't cheap... from the mess of a backed-up sewer line in your home, to the cost of repairs to have FOG-clogged lines opened up and cleaned out, FOG is something you definitely want to avoid.

Thankfully, avoidance is simple: never pour fats, oils, and grease down your sink drain, toilet, or garbage disposal unit. Here's what we recommend:

Tip #1: pour *any* excess fat, oil, and grease into an empty soup can, refrigerate or freeze until solid, and dispose it in your garbage. Some families prefer to save coffee to-go cups for this purpose; just double them up if you need extra leak protection. If nothing else, put the pan into your freezer to harden the FOG so you can toss it directly into the garbage.

Tip #2: when cleaning up the dishes, use paper towels to wipe the excess grease from your pots, pans, and utensils before washing. Toss them into your garbage can or better yet, put fat- oil- and grease-soaked paper towels into your compost bin.

Myth #1: if you mix in enough detergent when cleaning fat, oil and grease from your dishes, this will keep the grease from clogging your pipes.

Truth: dish soap may emulsify grease and enable you to remove it from your pans, but it does not break it down enough to move completely through pipes. The problem gets even worse during winter months, when pipes are more likely to get cold (especially those located on exterior walls of your home): grease solidifies into a pipe-clogging mess—whether or not you've added soap.

Myth #2: there's barely a tablespoon of oil left in my frying pan, surely with enough hot water, that will flush it through the system?

Truth: eventually all fats, oils and grease wind up somewhere. There's no such thing as getting it through the system.

Fix a Leak Week is Here!

In the same way that people use New Year's as a good excuse to change their smoke alarm battery, the EPA's annual Fix-A-Leak Week—from March 20 through 26—is a great excuse to check your home for water leaks.

Did you know? Ten percent of homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons or more... per day. Let's not even think about the cost of all that unused water...

The most common types of leaks include worn toilet flappers, dripping faucets, and leaking valves. Sometimes just a simple oversight can cause a big water bill: ever rinse off mud from your shoes outside and forget to turn off the spigot next to the house? Those spray nozzles are notorious for small, steady leaks, made worse if they are exposed to kind of freezing temperatures we've had these past months.

Most leaks are easy to correct, replacement parts are usually not expensive, and correcting the problem can add up to a 10% savings on your next water bill.

Leak Detection Tips:

The simplest way to check for the most common leak (toilet) is to place a drop of food coloring in the toilet tank. If the color shows up in the bowl within 10 minutes without flushing, you have a leak (usually an old, faulty toilet flapper). Be sure to flush immediately after this experiment to avoid staining the tank.



Examine your winter water usage. If the water usage for a family of four exceeds 12,000 gallons per month, there's a good chance a leak exists somewhere.

Check your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, you probably have a leak.

Leak Repair Tips:

The Saving Water Partnership has a page full of easy "how to fix leaks" videos on their website at:

www.savingwater.org/resources/fixaleakvideos/



Why Flushable and Disposable Wipes Are Anything But

More and more, those cleaning products labeled "flushable" or "disposable" are causing sewer backups and costly repairs—both at home and at public sewage treatment plants.

Some of the worst offenders include:

- Disinfecting "pop up" wipes
- Baby wipes
- Paper towels
- Make-up remover wipes
- Feminine hygiene products
- Toilet bowl wands

A good rule of thumb: if they don't dissolve as fast as toilet paper, they won't break down after being flushed. Please be on the safe side: always dispose "flushable" wipes in the garbage can.

For questions about specific products, just give us a call at (425) 235-9200.



For further information, call (800) 227-1860. **PHYSICAL OR CHEMICAL HAZARDOUS WASTE.** **STORAGE AND DISPOSAL:** Dispose of wipe in trash after use. Do not flush. Tightly close and recycle this empty container. Do not reuse or refill this empty container. Offer empty container for recycling. If recycling is not available, dispose in trash. **RIESGOS PARA LOS SERES HUMANOS Y ANIMALES.**