

SPRING 2023

# PIPE LINE

VOLUME 27 NUMBER 1

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# BUILDING OUR FUTURE





# GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE, RESPONSIBLE RATES



## Central San is your local sewer service provider—and so much more.

Every time you wash your dishes or clothes, flush the toilet, or use your sinks, bathtubs, and showers, we collect and clean all that dirty water. We also provide recycled water for landscape irrigation and industrial use; operate a highly successful Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility; and promote pollution prevention through award-winning education, outreach, and inspection programs. Our team of dedicated professionals work around the clock, serving nearly half a million residents and cleaning about 13 billion gallons of wastewater every year.

We take our work very seriously, but we can't do it alone. You, our customers, have provided us with the funds necessary to fulfill our mission of protecting public health and our local environment. In return, we continually strive to control costs and do everything we can to keep rates low without compromising service. **Recent steps we've taken include:**

- Holding operation and maintenance costs flat for the past eight years
- Securing low-cost state financing to save \$20 million in interest costs on large-scale projects
- Paying off pension liabilities, projected to save nearly \$15 million in interest payments
- Maintaining AAA (S&P) and Aa1 (Moody's) credit ratings to keep borrowing costs low
- Performing annual benchmarking to ensure efficient, cost-effective operations

Through proactive maintenance, we've extended the lifespan of our facilities and equipment to make every dollar work harder for our customers. However, to continue to provide the safe and reliable service you depend on and to fund critical infrastructure improvements, we need to make additional investments.

Recently, we mailed notices to all property owners within our service area with detailed information about proposed rate increases for the next two years. Central San's Board of Directors will consider the proposed rate increases at a public hearing on **April 20, 2023, at 2:30 p.m.** at our headquarters at **5019 Imhoff Place in Martinez.** We invite and encourage you to join us for the public hearing. You can find additional information about the proposed rates on our website at [centralsan.org/notice](https://centralsan.org/notice). If you have questions, please call our Community Information Line at (925) 335-7702.

Providing exceptional service in the most efficient and cost-effective ways possible, while being good stewards of our environment—that's our ongoing commitment to you. We're thankful for your support and the trust you place in us to do the job right.

**Roger S. Bailey**  
General Manager



# YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, over the past four years we've worked hard to complete these significant infrastructure improvement projects:

## RECYCLED WATER:

We completed construction of new storage facilities that will hold 6 million gallons of recycled water ready for distribution to make the most of our precious water resources.

## PIPES AND PUMPING STATIONS:

We replaced over 19 miles of aging neighborhood sewer pipes throughout our service area and completed major renovations to three large pumping stations serving Orinda and Moraga.

## INFLOW AND OUTFALL:

We rehabilitated the mechanical equipment and concrete structures where wastewater enters our treatment plant and the cleaning process begins. We also completed critical inspections and improvements to our 3.5-mile outfall pipeline, which carries cleaned water from our treatment plant to Suisun Bay to be safely returned to the environment.

## STEAM AND AERATION BLOWER SYSTEMS:

We completed comprehensive condition assessments of our aging steam and aeration blower systems and began design and construction of critical seismic and other upgrades.

We've accomplished a lot, but the work doesn't stop there. We're continually maintaining and improving our system. Read more about current and future projects on the following pages.





## WHAT'S NEXT?

As Central San begins our 77th year of service to the community, our key priorities include replacing aging infrastructure, meeting emerging regulatory requirements, preparing for the future, and ensuring environmental stewardship and sustainability in everything we do.

Our long-term planning has identified many upgrade and replacement projects for our collection system pipes, pumping stations, and treatment plant to ensure they continue to function properly now and into the future. The proposed rate increases will continue to provide the necessary funding for these critical projects scheduled for the next two years.

### 1. COLLECTION SYSTEM:

We will replace about 14 miles of aging neighborhood sewer pipes to ensure reliable service for decades to come.

### 2. PUMPING STATIONS:

We will continue the phased renovations of our pumping stations, focusing on three large pumping stations that are essential for continuous delivery of wastewater from the Martinez area to our treatment plant.

### 3. LARGE SEWER INSPECTIONS:

We will continue inspection and condition assessments of large sewers, called interceptors, to plan for future repairs. Measuring up to 8.5 feet in diameter, these pipes convey wastewater from neighborhoods throughout our service area; nearly half are over 50 years old.

### 4. SOLIDS HANDLING:

We will launch a large-scale, multi-year rehabilitation of our solids handling facilities, starting with replacing aging equipment including burners, centrifuges, pumps, and air pollution control equipment to ensure reliable ongoing processing of wastewater solids and compliance with strict air quality regulations.

### 5. STEAM AND AERATION BLOWER SYSTEMS:

We will repair or replace critical components of our aging steam generation equipment to address vulnerabilities identified through recent condition assessments.

### 6. AERATION BASINS:

We will begin the phased repair or replacement of mechanical equipment and concrete structures in our aeration basins to improve seismic reliability, enhance the efficiency of our biological treatment processes, better protect the environment, and prolong the lifespan of these critical facilities.

### 7. RECYCLED WATER:

We will complete the first phase of renovations to our recycled water plant, originally constructed in the 1970s. Along with our recently completed recycled water storage, these improvements will ensure continued reliability of our recycled water system and support expanded capacity for the future.



## NEIGHBORHOOD UPGRADES

Central San regularly maintains, repairs, or replaces sewer lines and other parts of our wastewater collection system to ensure trouble-free service for our customers. Our construction projects may cause short-term inconveniences, but they provide long-term benefits for you and your neighbors. We appreciate your understanding!

To learn more about these or other construction projects, please contact Senior Community Affairs Representative Chris Carpenter at (925) 229-7200 or [ccarp@centralsan.org](mailto:ccarp@centralsan.org), or visit: [centralsan.org/construction](http://centralsan.org/construction)

Here's what we're currently working on (estimated completion dates in parentheses).

**WALNUT CREEK, PHASE 16** will replace approximately 2.0 miles of sewers in the Castle Hill, Walnut Creek Estates, San Miguel, Larkey Park, and Pleasant Valley neighborhoods of Walnut Creek. **(June 2023)**

**MARTINEZ, PHASE 7** will replace approximately 1.25 miles of sewers along Alhambra Avenue (Escobar Street to Soto Street, C Street to F Street, and at H Street) as well as on Escobar Street (Alhambra Avenue to Berrellesa Street). **(June 2023)**

**SOUTH ORINDA, PHASE 9** will replace approximately 2.0 miles of sewers primarily in Overhill Road, Scenic Drive, Valley Drive, Leslee Lane, and Lavenida Drive, as well as various locations in Orinda, south of Interstate 24. **(September 2023)**

**SAN RAMON PUMPING STATION ELECTRICAL UPGRADES** will replace major electrical equipment at a pumping station in San Ramon. **(December 2023)**

**PUMPING STATION UPGRADES PROJECT, PHASE 2A** will replace 2 pumping stations in Martinez. **(December 2025)**





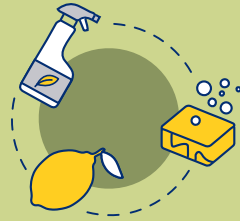
# OUR TOP THREE GREEN CLEANING TIPS

These simple tips can help you keep your home clean, while keeping our environment clean, too.



## 1. PAY ATTENTION TO PACKAGING:

Every year, Americans throw away more than 14 million tons of plastic packaging, most of which ends up in landfills—or worse, in our waterways and oceans. When shopping for cleaning supplies, opt for products with less packaging and avoid single-use plastic containers. Buy cleaners in concentrate or tablet form. Invest in a few refillable spray bottles. Search out brands that offer low- or no-waste products.



## 2. MIX YOUR OWN:

Making your own cleaning products at home can help you reduce waste, avoid toxic chemicals, and save money, too. With only white vinegar and baking soda in your pantry, you can tackle everything from slow drains to carpet stains. Add citrus peels or a few drops of essential oil to homemade cleansers to give your house that fresh, clean smell. Search “green cleaning recipes” online for tons of helpful ideas.



## 3. DISPOSE OF PRODUCTS SAFELY:

Got unwanted cleaning products lurking under your sink? Please don't dispose of them down the drain. Many commonly used products contain chemicals that, when poured down the drain, can pass through our wastewater treatment plant and end up in local waters, harming fish and wildlife. Instead, bring them to our Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility for reuse, recycling, or safe disposal.

## SPRING CLEANING? WE CAN HELP!

Has your spring cleaning unearthed old paint, dead batteries, unwanted pesticides, and more? Bring us your household hazardous waste, and we'll take care of the rest. If you're in need of household or garden products, be sure to check out our Reuse Room. It's stocked with a variety of items brought in for disposal that are still in usable condition—all free to Central San customers!

### HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION FACILITY

4797 IMHOFF PLACE, MARTINEZ, CA 94553  
1-800-646-1431 OR [CENTRALSAN.ORG/HHW](http://CENTRALSAN.ORG/HHW)

**RESIDENTS:** Monday–Saturday, 7 a.m. – 2 p.m.

**REUSE ROOM:** Monday–Saturday, 7 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**BUSINESSES:** Monday–Saturday, by appointment

**HOLIDAY CLOSURES:** May 29, July 4, September 4, November 11



# YOUR GARDEN WILL LOVE OUR RECYCLED WATER

Keep your garden happy while helping save our precious drinking water supplies! Central San's recycled water is ideal for hand-watering gardens, trees, and lawns. Plus, there's no extra charge for our residential customers.

## VISIT OUR RECYCLED WATER FILL STATION!

The Residential Recycled Water Fill Station is located behind our Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility at 4797 Imhoff Place, Martinez. The station is typically open Monday through Saturday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. The fill station may close before, during, and after periods of rain, so please call ahead to confirm we're open: (925) 335-7717.

Before filling up for the first time, you'll need to fill out the Residential Recycled Water Fill Station Use Application/Agreement and receive a brief training on the use of recycled water. We encourage you to read and complete the form before your visit. Download a copy at: [centralsan.org/recycledwater](http://centralsan.org/recycledwater)

Bring your own containers. They must be made specifically to hold liquids, be a minimum size of one gallon, have water-tight lids, and be secured for safe transport.

The maximum fill per trip is 300 gallons. There is no limit on the number of trips. Keep in mind that water is heavy! Ten gallons weigh more than 80 pounds; 100 gallons weigh more than 800 pounds. When driving vehicles with such heavy loads, expect less stability and be sure to allow for extra stopping distance.

Finally, please note that recycled water should not be consumed or allowed to run off into storm drains.

For more information, call (925) 335-7717 or visit: [centralsan.org/recycledwater](http://centralsan.org/recycledwater)





# CENTRAL SAN BY THE NUMBERS

## 1,540

**MILES OF UNDERGROUND SEWER PIPES** that we maintain to collect and carry wastewater from homes and businesses throughout our service area to our treatment plant in Martinez. Laid end-to-end, our pipes would stretch from here to Kansas City, Missouri!

## 18

**NUMBER OF PUMPING STATIONS** we maintain to keep wastewater flowing in parts of our service area where we can't rely on gravity.

## 102

**DIAMETER,** in inches, of our largest sewer pipes.



## 24

**HOURS PER DAY** that we operate. Our team of dedicated wastewater professionals work around the clock, every day of the year to provide you safe and reliable sewer service, day and night.

## 800

**AVERAGE MILES OF PIPE** we clean every year to remove grease, wipes, roots, and other clog culprits to prevent sewage overflows. We also inspect about 150 miles every year using closed circuit TV cameras.



## 600 MILLION

**GALLONS OF WATER** that we recycle every year on average for landscape irrigation and industrial use, helping save precious drinking water supplies. We also provide recycled water at no extra charge for our residential customers—learn more on page 7.

## 13 BILLION

**GALLONS OF WASTEWATER** that we clean in a typical year. That's the equivalent of almost 20,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools! Most of this water we return safely to the environment, and the rest we recycle.

## 36,800

**APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MAINTENANCE ACCESS COVERS** (a.k.a. "manholes") and cleanouts that we maintain. Our crews use the covers to access our pipes for cleaning and inspections. Every year we replace 400-500 covers in conjunction with pipeline replacements, city paving projects, and other repairs.

In celebration of our 75th anniversary in 2021, we designed a new cover to highlight the beauty of our service area and our mission to protect public health and the environment. Keep an eye out and you might start seeing them around your town!



### WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We work hard to keep our sewer system in tip-top shape, and we have one of the best reliability records in the state. However, as amazing as our employees are, they cannot be everywhere at once. If you notice any of the following issues, please let us know.

**OVERFLOWS:** If you see, smell, or suspect a sewage overflow or spill, please call us immediately at (925) 933-0990. We will dispatch a crew to investigate and take appropriate action as quickly as possible.

**ODORS:** We do our best to control odors throughout the treatment process, but occasionally they are still noticeable. You can report bothersome odors from our treatment plant or sewer system to our Odor Hotline at (925) 335-7703.

**TROUBLESOME COVERS:** Occasionally, the covers on our maintenance access holes (or "manholes") can create tripping hazards, noise, or other problems. If you notice a cover in need of repair or adjustment, call us at (925) 933-0990.

**REMINDER: WIPES CLOG PIPES!** Unlike toilet paper, wipes don't disintegrate easily (if at all) when flushed. They clog pipes in homes, and cause clogs, overflows, and equipment malfunctions in our sewer pipes, pumping stations, and treatment plant. Please help us protect our sewer system and the environment by disposing of *all* wipes where they belong: in the trash.





## COMING SOON: NEW RV WASTEWATER DISPOSAL STATION

### WE ASKED, YOU ANSWERED, WE BUILT IT!

Central San is opening a recreational vehicle (RV) wastewater disposal station at our treatment plant site in Martinez. The newly constructed facility will provide a convenient, no-cost way for our customers to empty their RV tanks and safely dispose of the wastewater.

In a previous issue of *Pipeline*, we asked our customers if you would use an RV wastewater disposal station, and the answer was a resounding YES! Beyond recreation, RVs provide affordable housing for many members of our community, as well as emergency housing during wildfires, earthquakes, or other natural disasters. The new disposal station will help reduce improper or illegal dumping from RVs,

which can pollute our local waterways and harm public health.

Located on Imhoff Drive in Martinez, the self-service station will be open daily. Under a three-year pilot program approved by Central San's Board of Directors, there will be no charge to use the disposal station.

As this *Pipeline* goes to press, we're just putting the finishing touches on the facility, including fencing and signage. The disposal station is scheduled to **open March 6**, in plenty of time for any summer travel or camping plans. Before dropping by, be sure to check our website for the latest information: [centralsan.org/rv](https://centralsan.org/rv)

### CONNECT WITH US!


Follow Central San for upcoming tours and events, pollution prevention tips, news, photos, and more.

 @centralsan

 @centralsandist

 @centralsandist

 @centralsandist

 New! We're now on Nextdoor

## HELP FOR LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

If you're having trouble paying your Central San annual Sewer Service Charge, the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) may be able to help.

LIHWAP is a federally funded program that offers eligible residents a one-time payment to help pay their water or wastewater utility bills. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government awarded California funding to help households struggling to afford the costs of water and wastewater service, and many Californians in need may qualify. Central San has enrolled in LIHWAP, and our customers are eligible to apply.

Learn more about LIHWAP on our website at: [centralsan.org/lihwap](https://centralsan.org/lihwap)

To apply for assistance, contact Contra Costa County's local LIHWAP service provider:

**CONTRA COSTA EMPLOYMENT &  
HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT/  
COMMUNITY SERVICES BUREAU**

**1470 Civic Court, Ste 200**

**Concord, CA 94520**

Phone: (925) 681-6380

Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.





# GO WITH THE FLOW BY FOOT OR BY BIKE

Ever wonder what happens after you flush? Central San collects and cleans more than 35 million gallons of wastewater each and every day. To transport all this water to our treatment plant, we rely on over 1,500 miles of sewer lines, 18 pumping stations, and the people power of 60 Collection System Operators across our 146-square-mile service area.


Much of this collection process occurs underground, making it invisible to most people. However, if you know what to look for, you might spot clues that can help you better understand what is happening just out of sight. One of the easiest clues to look for are maintenance access covers (also known as “manholes”). These covers provide access points where our crews can inspect, clean, and maintain our pipes. If you see a cover, try imagining the sewer pipe running underneath! (**WARNING:** Never open an access hole or remove a cover.)

Most of our covers follow sewer lines located under the streets where cars drive, making it hard to safely take a closer look. However, there just so happens to be a pedestrian-friendly way to follow where your wastewater goes! For 21 miles, the Iron Horse Trail pedestrian and bicycling path follows one of our sewer lines—nearly the entirety of the flow from the southeastern-most corner of our service area in San Ramon all the way to our treatment plant in Martinez.

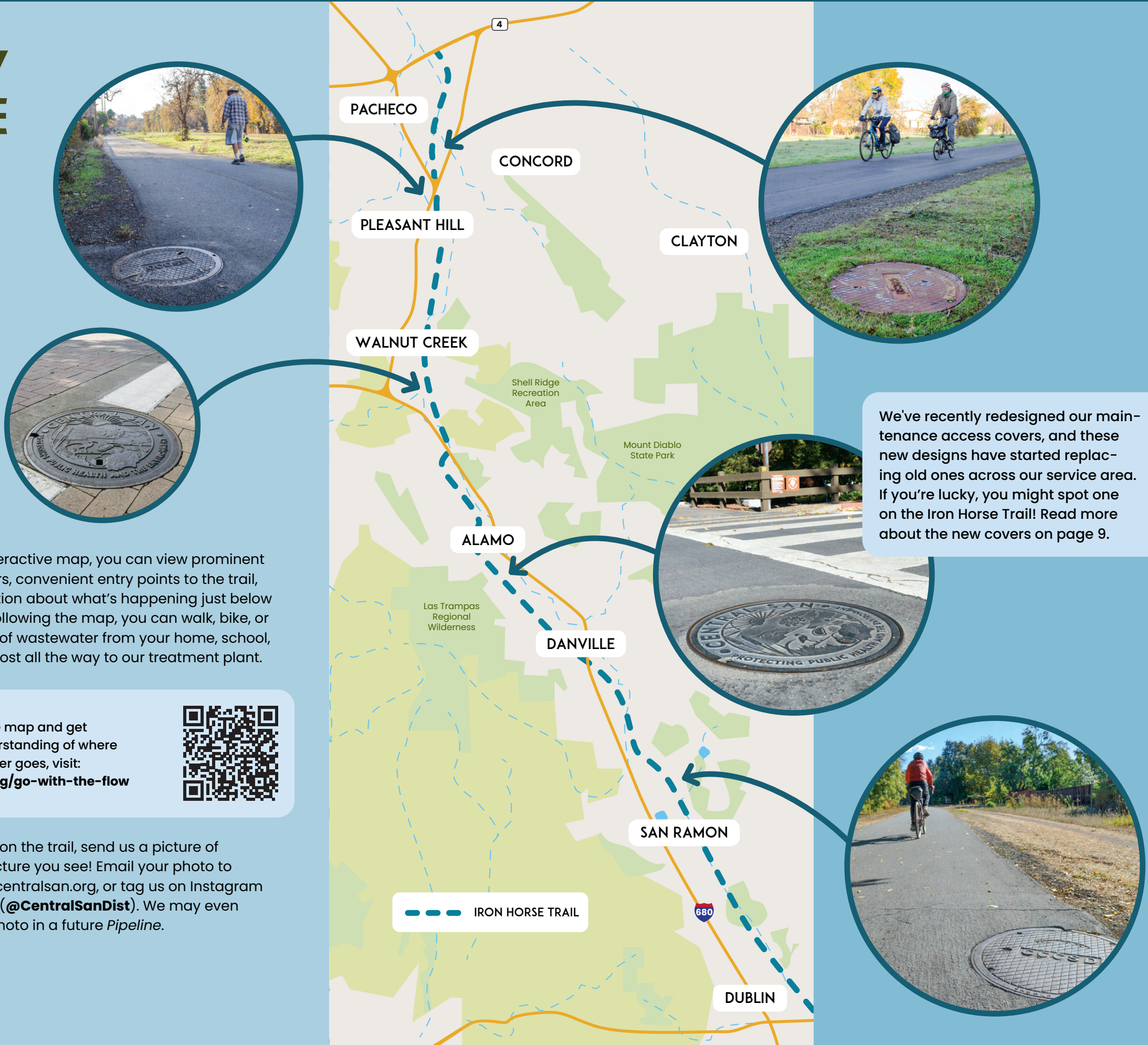
To help you see (and sometimes hear) the flow of wastewater along this path, we’ve built a visual map of the trail that anyone can use. We relied on the same mapping technology that helps our crews in the field track the location, age, and health of our pipes underground. This technology also allows our crews to identify the location of maintenance access covers across our service area so we can inspect, clean, and repair our pipes when needed.

Using the interactive map, you can view prominent access covers, convenient entry points to the trail, and information about what’s happening just below ground! By following the map, you can walk, bike, or run the path of wastewater from your home, school, or office, almost all the way to our treatment plant.

To explore the map and get a better understanding of where your dirty water goes, visit: [centralsan.org/go-with-the-flow](https://centralsan.org/go-with-the-flow)



If you go out on the trail, send us a picture of the infrastructure you see! Email your photo to [blavender@centralsan.org](mailto:blavender@centralsan.org), or tag us on Instagram or Facebook ([@CentralSanDist](https://www.instagram.com/CentralSanDist)). We may even share your photo in a future *Pipeline*.



**CLAYTON**

**CONCORD**

**PACHECO**

**PLEASANT HILL**

**WALNUT CREEK**

**ALAMO**

**DANVILLE**

**SAN RAMON**

**DUBLIN**

Shell Ridge Recreation Area

Mount Diablo State Park

Las Trampas Regional Wilderness

4

680

IRON HORSE TRAIL

We've recently redesigned our maintenance access covers, and these new designs have started replacing old ones across our service area. If you're lucky, you might spot one on the Iron Horse Trail! Read more about the new covers on page 9.



# GO WITH THE FLOW

The water you flush down the toilet or wash down the drain must travel under streets, sidewalks, houses, bridges, and, sometimes, against gravity to get to our treatment plant. Usually, this path can be tricky to see since it's underground, but looking out for maintenance access covers can help keep you on the right track to go with the flow!

Help Piper follow the flow of water through the pipes from her home to our treatment plant by completing the maze and counting how many covers you can collect along the way! Feel free to color our covers as you go or draw additional things you might see along the trail.



END



START

COVERS COLLECTED: \_\_\_\_\_

When you're done, cut out this page and mail it to:

**PIPER THE PIPE PROTECTOR  
CENTRAL SAN  
5019 IMHOFF PLACE  
MARTINEZ, CA 94553**

Include your name and address, and we will send you a canvas drawstring backpack you can use when exploring our system in real life, like out on the Iron Horse Trail! (See pages 12-13.)



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## WE ARE HERE TO HELP

General Information	(925) 228-9500 or <a href="http://CentralSan.org">CentralSan.org</a>
Sewer Overflows	(925) 933-0990
Household Hazardous Waste InfoLine	(800) 646-1431 or <a href="http://CentralSan.org/HHW">CentralSan.org/HHW</a>
Recycled Water Fill Station InfoLine	(925) 335-7717
Sewer connection permits/Permit Counter	(925) 229-7371
Community Information Line	(925) 335-7702
Student Education Programs	(925) 335-7723 or <a href="http://CentralSan.org/Learn">CentralSan.org/Learn</a>
Environmental Compliance	(925) 229-7288
Report illegal discharges into sewer system	(925) 229-7288 (during business hours); (925) 229-7214 (after hours)
Treatment Plant InfoLine (Report Odors)	(925) 335-7703
Employment Opportunities	<a href="http://CentralSan.org/Careers">CentralSan.org/Careers</a>

Board meetings are open to the public and are usually held on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 2:30 p.m. in the Central San Board Room, 5019 Imhoff Place, Martinez. Meetings can be live-streamed at [centralsan.org](http://centralsan.org)

### The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District PIPELINE

Written and designed by Central San staff to communicate pollution prevention messages to the people and communities we serve.

Ann Vallée, Editor, Writer  
Kelsey Lansang, Graphic Designer  
Joseph Zumbo, Photographer

View archived issues at [CentralSan.org](http://CentralSan.org)

PIPELINE is printed with soy-based inks on Recycled Paper



Please share or recycle this newsletter.



**Central San serves nearly half a million customers within its 146-square-mile service area.**

- Wastewater collection & treatment; Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) disposal.
- Wastewater treatment & HHW disposal in Concord & Clayton by contract.
- HHW disposal only.
- Central San headquarters, treatment plant, HHW Facility & Residential Recycled Water Fill Station.