

Spring 2013

THE CENTRAL CONTRA COSTA SANITARY DISTRICT

Volume 17  
Number 1

# PIPELINE

A newsletter about protecting public health and the environment

Sewer Service Charges:

What do I  
*get*  
for my  
*money*

*Please see Page 3*

# New Sewer Rates Being Considered

**A**t a public hearing scheduled for June 6, the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District Board of Directors will determine whether or not to raise the annual Sewer Service Charge for fiscal year 2013-14 and 2014-15.

The current residential Sewer Service Charge is \$371 per year. The Sewer Service Charge for business customers depends on the composition and amount of sewage they produce.

The Sewer Service Charge is collected from property owners via their annual property tax bills, but is a fee for services, not a tax.

It provides approximately 60% of our revenue, paying for labor, benefits, chemicals, utilities, materials, supplies, repairs, maintenance, and other expenses necessary for collecting, treating, and disposing of wastewater for more than 461,000 residents and more than 5,000 businesses in Central Contra Costa County. It also helps pay for the operation of our popular Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility, as well as the design, construction, and renovation of sewer pipelines, pumping stations, and treatment plant facilities.

Other sources of revenue for the District include sewer connection fees, contract charges for District services provided for others, and a small portion of local property taxes.

## Why an Increase Is Being Considered

For several months, the Board of Directors has been reviewing the

District's finances and business plans, and studying new State and Federal regulations that will impact the District financially in both the short term and the long term.

At the June 6 public hearing, the Board will determine whether an increase in the annual Sewer Service Charge is necessary to cover rising costs associated with infrastructure renewal, more stringent regulatory compliance, labor (particularly unfunded pension liabilities and health care), materials, and other expenses.

Despite ongoing efforts to enhance revenue sources and cut spending – which include

*...our goal is always to give our customers maximum value for their money.*

reducing operating expenses, deferring nonessential repairs and upgrades to facilities, filling only essential positions, cutting back on outside services, and spending down reserve funds – the costs of running a modern wastewater collection and treatment system are substantial, and are going up.

State and Federal water and air quality regulations are becoming increasingly more stringent.

While we applaud such actions designed to further protect public health and the environment, we will need to make significant investments in our collection system and treatment processes (perhaps as much as \$145 million over the next ten years) to comply.

Another financial challenge is nearly \$200 million

*Please see Sewer Rates, Page 9*

## Central San Named Best in the Bay Area



**C**entral San's people and programs are among the best in the Bay area. This fact was acknowledged recently when the District won the Collection System of the Year and Treatment Plant of the Year awards from the California Water Environment Association, San Francisco Bay Section.

The awards are earned through

remarkable accomplishments in compliance, safety, training, innovative practices, cost effectiveness and superior operations. It's unusual for an agency to win both the Collection System and Treatment Plant awards in the same year; Central San has done so twice.

The District will now go on to compete at the statewide level in April.

## WHAT DO I GET FOR MY MONEY:

# Services Funded by Sewer Service Charges

The annual Sewer Service Charge pays for many community services, including:

- Operating and maintaining a modern wastewater treatment facility that protects public health and the environment by removing thousands of pollutants before safely returning the water to Suisun Bay.



- Maintaining and repairing 1,500 miles of sewer pipelines and 19 pumping stations so 40 million gallons of wastewater can reliably flow to our treatment facilities from 461,000 residents and 5,000 businesses every day.
- Preventing water pollution by collecting, recycling, and safely disposing of more than 2 million pounds of household hazardous wastes and unwanted pharmaceuticals each year; conducting pretreatment, regulatory monitoring and enforcement activities for business and industrial users; and promoting pollution prevention through public outreach and student education programs.
- Renovating, constructing and maintaining buildings, pipelines, facilities and equipment to ensure a lasting, reliable, and efficient infrastructure.
- Providing 600 million gallons of recycled water for landscape irrigation, plant operations, and other uses each year.

(See article on page 7.)



# FAQs About Our Unfunded Liability

## Q What is an Unfunded Liability?

A. The unfunded liability is the amount of money owed by the District for employee benefits, which include pension costs, retiree medical benefits, and the cost of accrued vacation time and sick leave which is paid when an employee leaves the District. It's called an unfunded liability because there are not sufficient assets on hand today to meet projected pension and medical benefit payments promised for the next 50+ years. This is not at all unusual for a pension system.

## Q. How much is Central San's unfunded liability?

A. Our total unfunded liability is \$186.7 million. This includes \$109.1 million for pension-related Unfunded Actuarial Accrued Liability, and \$77.6 million for Other Post Employment Benefits (the costs of medical benefits for current and future retirees).

## Q. How did the unfunded liability get so large?

A. Our unfunded liability in 2007 was \$33.3 million, which was being paid down each year. The increased liability occurred through Contra Costa County Employees' Retirement Association (CCCERA), the retirement board that handles Central San's pensions.

CCCERA's market value took a loss of 28.35% when the stock market crashed in 2008, which increased our unfunded liability by \$42.4 million over the past four years. When CCCERA does not make its annual targeted return of 7.75% on investments, the amount of the unfunded liability grows to cover that loss of earnings. CCCERA's investments have earned only 4.77% over the past 10 years.



In addition, the depooling of CCCERA's assets in December 2009, which required us to pay the actual cost of our retirement program rather than a pool average that had been shared by Contra Costa County and 16 other public agencies, raised our unfunded pension liability by an additional \$33.4 million.

## Q. What is being done to pay down or eliminate both liabilities?

A. Central San's 10-Year Plan (which is updated each year) calls for additional payments toward the pension unfunded liability of \$75 million over the next 10 years. Central San's retiree health care debt, which now stands at \$77.6 million, is being paid down at \$8.3 million per year.

## This Newsletter is Online

Would you like to read past issues, or share Pipeline newsletters with family or friends who do not receive them through the mail?

All that's needed is Internet access; every issue since Fall 2005 is freely available on our website. Please feel free to share this link:

[www.centrialsan.org/publications](http://www.centrialsan.org/publications)

## GM Ann Farrell Retires

Central Contra Costa Sanitary District General Manager Ann Farrell retired in January. Director of Operations Curt Swanson has been named by the Board to serve as Provisional General Manager while the important process of selecting a permanent replacement takes place.





# Join Us On Earth Day

**W**e will have a booth at the Earth Day Festival being held at the John Muir National Historic Site, 4202 Alhambra Ave., Martinez, on Saturday, April 20. Our friendly staff will share tips and handouts about pollution prevention and household hazardous waste disposal. Stop by to say hi!

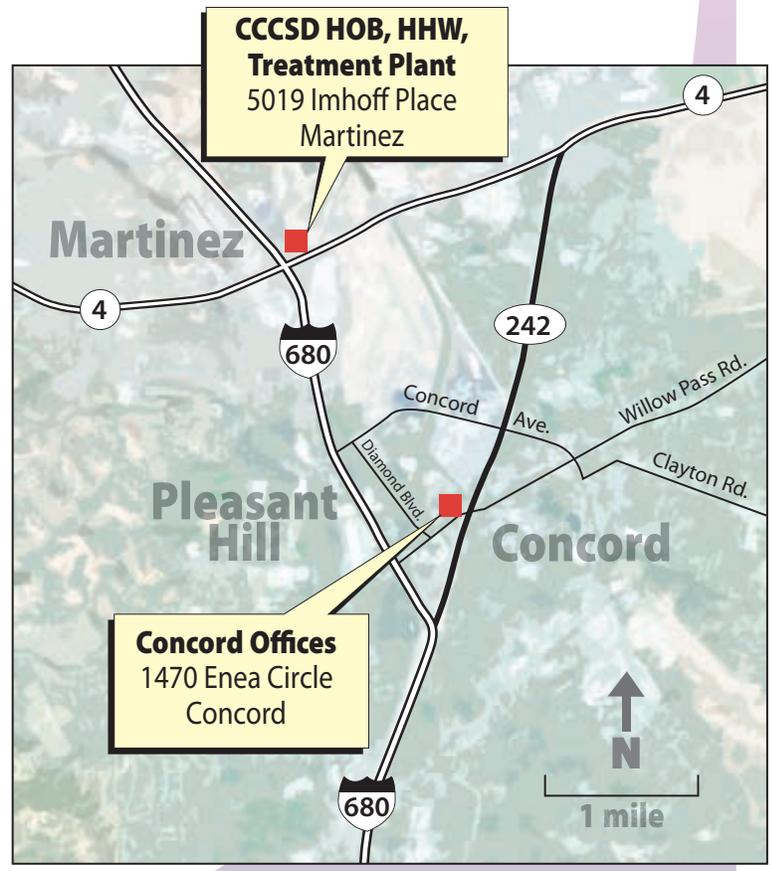
## Staff & Services Temporarily Relocated

**D**ue to needed seismic upgrades, the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District's headquarters building at 5019 Imhoff Place in Martinez is undergoing retrofit work. The work began in February and is expected to take about eight months.

During this period, employees and services are operating out of various temporary locations. Some, such as the Permit Counter, are across the street from the headquarters; others, including Human Resources, are in a leased office space at 1470 Enea Circle in Concord.

Note: This does not affect the District Board Room, Multipurpose Room, or the staff who work in the Plant Operations building.

If you plan to visit, please call beforehand to find out where to go: (925) 229-9500. You can also visit our website for more information: [www.centrialsan.org](http://www.centrialsan.org)



# Your Pesticide May Be Polluting the Bay

**P**esticide use around homes has been a source of water pollution for many years.

Rainfall and watering of lawns and gardens can create runoff that washes pesticides, fertilizers, and other contaminants into storm

drains through which water flows directly to creeks and the Bay. Polluted runoff has been linked to fish kills and loss of diversity in aquatic species.

Pollutants of particular concern are pesticides made with pyrethroids. Pyrethroids are synthetic versions of pyrethrin, a natural insecticide found in certain species of chrysanthemum. Pyrethroids do not break down in sunlight as quickly as pyrethrin, and are particularly dangerous to aquatic life, even at low concentrations.

Check labels carefully and avoid using pesticides containing pyrethroids (including permethrin, bifenthrin and deltamethrin).

Avoid using pesticides outdoors when rain is forecast; do not overwater lawns or gardens; reduce or eliminate runoff.

These and other less-toxic pest control and gardening tips are described in more detail on our website, [www.centralan.org](http://www.centralan.org). Click on "Healthy Garden Guide" in the lower left of the home page.



## Protect Water Quality: DO NOT Flush Your Drugs!

**D**o you have expired or unwanted medications? Disposing of them properly will help to protect your family, your community, and the environment. Please bring them to one of these free drop-off sites for safe disposal:

- **City of Clayton Police Dept.**  
6000 Heritage Trail, Clayton
- **City of Concord Police Dept.**  
1350 Galindo St., Concord
- **Sheriff's Field Operations Building**  
1980 Muir Rd., Martinez
- **Contra Costa Medical Center Sheriff's Substation**  
(check with deputy on duty)  
2500 Alhambra Ave., Martinez
- **Town of Danville Police Dept.**  
510 La Gonda Way, Danville
- **City of Martinez Police Dept.**  
525 Henrietta St., Martinez
- **Town of Moraga Police Dept.**  
329 Rheem Blvd., Moraga
- **City of Orinda Police Dept.**  
22 Orinda Way, Orinda
- **City of Pleasant Hill Police Dept.**  
330 Civic Dr., Pleasant Hill
- **City of San Ramon Police Dept.**  
2401 Crow Canyon Rd., San Ramon
- **Walnut Creek City Hall**  
1666 North Main St., Walnut Creek

To ensure privacy, transfer prescribed pills to a sealable plastic bag before depositing. To prevent spills, leave liquids in original bottles (cross out personal information) and seal within a plastic bag.

**Do not put sharps or anything other than medications in the container!**

For more information, call 1-800-646-1431 or visit [www.centrialsan.org](http://www.centrialsan.org)

# Amazing System Allows You to Flush and Forget!



**S**ewers. Nobody likes them. They're dark, wet, and smelly; underground and unappreciated. But before sewers, human waste was disposed of in a variety of unsanitary ways – including emptying chamber pots into the street! Typhoid and other diseases were common and deadly.

We've come a long way since then. Now you can just flush and forget, knowing there is a reliable system in place to safely whisk away the human waste and clean the water it pollutes.

What you might not know is the extent of effort and expense required to maintain such a reliable system.

We won't go into the difficulties of setting up our system in the first place. Suffice it to say that building sewers (to which nearly 160,000 homes, schools, hospitals and other buildings are connected) and a modern wastewater treatment plant wasn't fast, easy or cheap.

## But that system is in place now, so what's there to worry about?

### AGE, DETERIORATION, CAPACITY

Some original sections of the sewer system were constructed before the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District was formed in 1946. We "inherited" those pipes, which were made of clay. Old clay pipes tend to deteriorate and break apart. (Most sewers today are made of PVC.) Another issue is capacity. Small pipes are fine for small communities, but as the population expands, so must the size of the sewer system.

### CLOGS

Have you ever noticed how many trees are in this area? Unfortunately, their roots can infiltrate and grow inside sewers and are the number-one cause of clogs. The number-two cause is grease, which hardens and builds up inside pipes after being poured or washed down the drains of countless homes and restaurants. Number three and coming on strong are disposable wipes. They (even those labeled "flushable") do not break down quickly in water like toilet paper does. They not only clog sewers, they clog our pumps and other equipment. If clogs are not found and cleared in time, sewage overflows can result.

### POLLUTANTS

Our system does an excellent job of taking care of the normal stuff that goes down drains and into our sewers, such as dirty water, soap, human waste, and toilet paper. But other substances, many of which are toxic to aquatic life, sometime find their way into the system as well. These include mercury, dioxin, cyanide, copper, lead, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, paint products, and thousands of chemicals. Because our modern wastewater treatment plant cannot remove all traces of pollutants such as these, pollution prevention is a top priority.

Upgrading aging infrastructure, repairing pipes, clearing clogs, preventing overflows, and ensuring that the wastewater we treat each day is clean and safe for the environment before we recycle or discharge it into Suisun Bay requires a massive ongoing effort.

Think of us as a small army fighting a never-ending battle to keep you and the environment safe from the hazards of water pollution. In addition to the soldiers, an army's success depends on leadership, teamwork, training, weapons, analysis, planning, communication, logistics, supplies, vehicles, equipment, facilities... you get the idea.

What we do is essential, and it costs more than \$100 million dollars each year. But what we charge each residential customer for this amazing system amounts to just over \$1 per day. We hope you feel that money is well spent.





# MORE THAN 26 MILLION POUNDS

*of Household Hazardous Waste kept out of the environment!*

SINCE  
1997

THANK YOU FOR USING THE HHW COLLECTION FACILITY

## A Drive-Through That's Good for Your Waste!

**W**e borrowed the fast food industry's successful drive-through concept to make using our Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility as convenient as possible.

When you bring paint, batteries, oil, pesticides, chemicals, fluorescent lights and other forms of household hazardous waste to our facility for safe disposal, just pull in and stay comfortably in your car while a friendly technician unloads your items. It only takes a few minutes, then you can be on your way, knowing you helped to keep pollutants out of the environment.

For residents of central Contra Costa County, no appointment is needed and there's no drop-off charge! (Businesses need an appointment and must pay a nominal fee.)

### Please Note Transportation Restrictions

Materials must be packaged in sturdy, non-leaking containers (ideally, the originals) no larger than five gallons in size. For transportation safety, the quantity for each trip is limited to 125 pounds or 15 gallons. However, you can make as many trips to the facility in one day as you like.

### Bring Some, Take Some – or Just Take Some (Free)!

Our goal is to reuse and recycle as many of the items brought to the facility as possible. So when you visit, be sure to check out our Reuse Room. It's stocked with items brought in for disposal (such as paint, wood stain, garden products, and a wide variety of cleansers and automotive products) that are still in useable condition – and they are free for the taking.

For more information about the HHW Facility, please call 1-800-646-1431 or visit [www.centrialsan.org](http://www.centrialsan.org)

## Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility

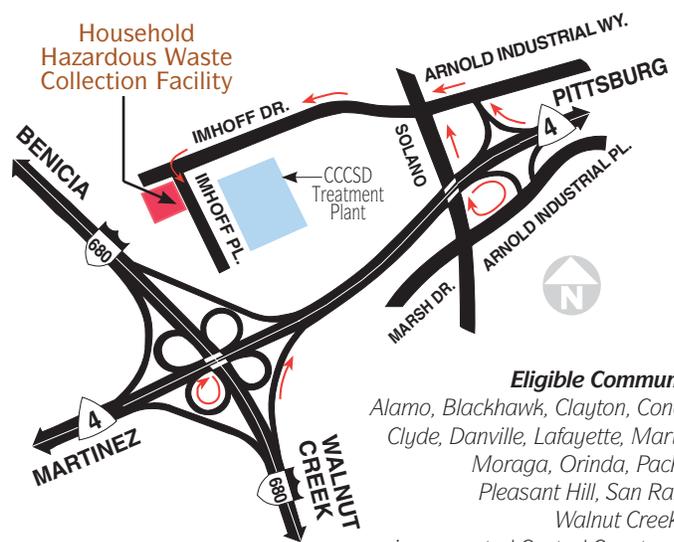
4797 Imhoff Place, Martinez, CA 94553-4392

### HOURS

**Residents:** Monday – Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
(Reuse Room closes at 3:30 p.m.)

**Businesses:** Monday – Saturday, *by appointment only*

**1-800-646-1431**



### Eligible Communities

Alamo, Blackhawk, Clayton, Concord, Clyde, Danville, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Orinda, Pacheco, Pleasant Hill, San Ramon, Walnut Creek and unincorporated Central County areas.

- From Hwy. 4 take the Solano Way exit.
- From I-680 take Hwy. 4 East to Solano Way exit.

## ... Sewer Rates (cont'd from page 2)

in unfunded liabilities the District has already begun to pay down (see article on Page 4).

No one enjoys the idea of rate increases (least of all our Board of Directors), and our goal is always to give our customers maximum value for their money. Our rates are lower than those of most other wastewater agencies in the Bay area. However, our rates must remain appropriate to enable us to meet all regulatory requirements, provide the public health and environmental protection services demanded by the community, and properly maintain publicly funded assets.

### Property Owners are Invited to Comment

As a public utility in California, we cannot raise rates without giving constituents an opportunity to protest the proposed increase. In April, we will send a state-mandated Proposition 218 notification to affected property owners with details about the possible rate increase, the public hearing at which the increase will be considered, and instructions on how to comment on or protest the increase. If more than 50% of property owners protest the increase before or during the June 6 public hearing, the District will be legally prohibited from raising the rates.

If you have questions about your Sewer Service Charge, please contact us via email at [rates@centralsan.org](mailto:rates@centralsan.org) or call (925) 335-7739.

### Need a Guest Speaker for Your Group?

If your audience would be interested in hearing about Central San and our water pollution prevention efforts, please call our Public InfoLine at (925) 335-7702 and leave a message about your event. We'll do our best to provide a speaker for you, free of charge.

## How to Protect Your Property from Raw Sewage

We maintain 1,500 miles of sewers and work very hard to prevent failures, clogs, and overflows. Our efforts have resulted in one of the lowest overflow rates in California. But no matter what we do, we can never totally eliminate the possibility of an overflow. There are just too many things beyond our control. Stuff happens.

But it needn't happen to you.

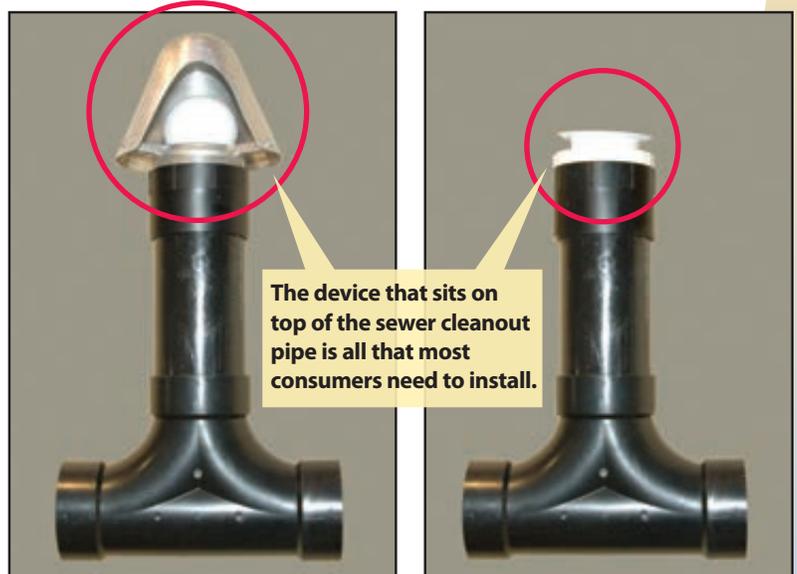
By making sure an Overflow Protection Device is installed on your home's private side-sewer, you will prevent sewage from backing up into your home from a clogged sewer main. The device causes sewage backing up in your pipe from the direction of the street to spill into your yard, rather than come up through drains inside your home.

*Note: It will not help if your pipe is clogged between the drain and the device, so keep disposable wipes, grease, and anything else that might cause clogs out of your pipes!*

Overflow Protection Devices are available through plumbing supply stores. We recommend installation by a licensed plumber. Keep the device clear of obstructions, such as dirt or vegetation, that might interfere with its operation.

For more information, please call our Permit Counter staff at (925) 229-7371.

OVERFLOW  
PROTECTION  
DEVICES



There are different styles of Overflow Protection Devices. The "mushroom" style, pictured left, has been cut away to show the ball that sits on the pipe opening inside the metal covering. The style pictured at right (shown with the top popped up) is best for installing in driveways or other areas where above-ground protrusions are undesirable.

## Infrastructure Improvements

Central Contra Costa Sanitary District regularly maintains, repairs or replaces sewer lines and other elements of its 1,500-mile wastewater collection system to ensure continuous, trouble-free service for our 461,100 customers. We do our best to minimize the inconveniences our projects cause and appreciate your understanding.

Here's a brief summary of our major ongoing construction projects:

### Martinez and Walnut Creek

The **2013 CIPP Project** is renovating sewers in South Main Street and Lancaster Road between Westwood Court and Castle Hill Road in Walnut Creek; and on the Shell Refinery Property and east along Marina Vista to Highway I-680 in Martinez. Expected completion: Nov. 2013.

### Concord

The **Concord Landscape Project** is extending the District's recycled water system in the Diamond Blvd. and Meridian Park Blvd. area. Expected completion: Jan. 2014.

### Lafayette

The **Lafayette Sewer Renovation Project, Phase 8**, is renovating sewers in the Upper Happy Valley Road and South Peardale Drive areas. Expected completion: Feb. 2014.

### Orinda

The **North Orinda Sewer Renovations Project, Phase 5**, is renovating sewers in the Camino Sobrate and La Cuesta Road areas of North Orinda. Expected completion: March 2014.

### For more info...

*For more information about these or other construction projects, please contact Community Affairs Representative Chris Carpenter at (925) 229-7200 or [ccarp@centralsan.org](mailto:ccarp@centralsan.org).*

### More info:

Detailed project maps are posted on our website, [www.centralsan.org](http://www.centralsan.org) (check the "Construction Zone" in the lower right of the home page).



## Don't Flush So-Called "Flushable" Wipes!

If you use disposable wipes while doing your spring cleaning, please don't flush them down the toilet – even if they are labeled as "flushable."

That label simply means they will go down your toilet when flushed. What you should be concerned about is what can happen after such products are flushed.

Unlike toilet paper, these items do not quickly disintegrate in water. They stay largely intact as they travel through the sewer pipes and can get caught on roots or other debris, increasing the risk of clogs.

As these products have grown in popularity, our crews have been spending time and resources to remove mounds of disposable wipes that clog our public sewer lines, pumps, and equipment. These items are an even greater threat to your home's sewer line, which is much smaller and more easily clogged.

Please throw away cleaning/disinfecting wipes, moist towelettes, personal hygiene products, and similar products in the trash – never in your toilet.

***No matter what a label says, the only items you should flush are human waste and toilet paper.***

# Handy-Dandy Flushability Guide

**“Should I  
Flush it?”**



**Is it Human  
Waste or  
Toilet Paper?**

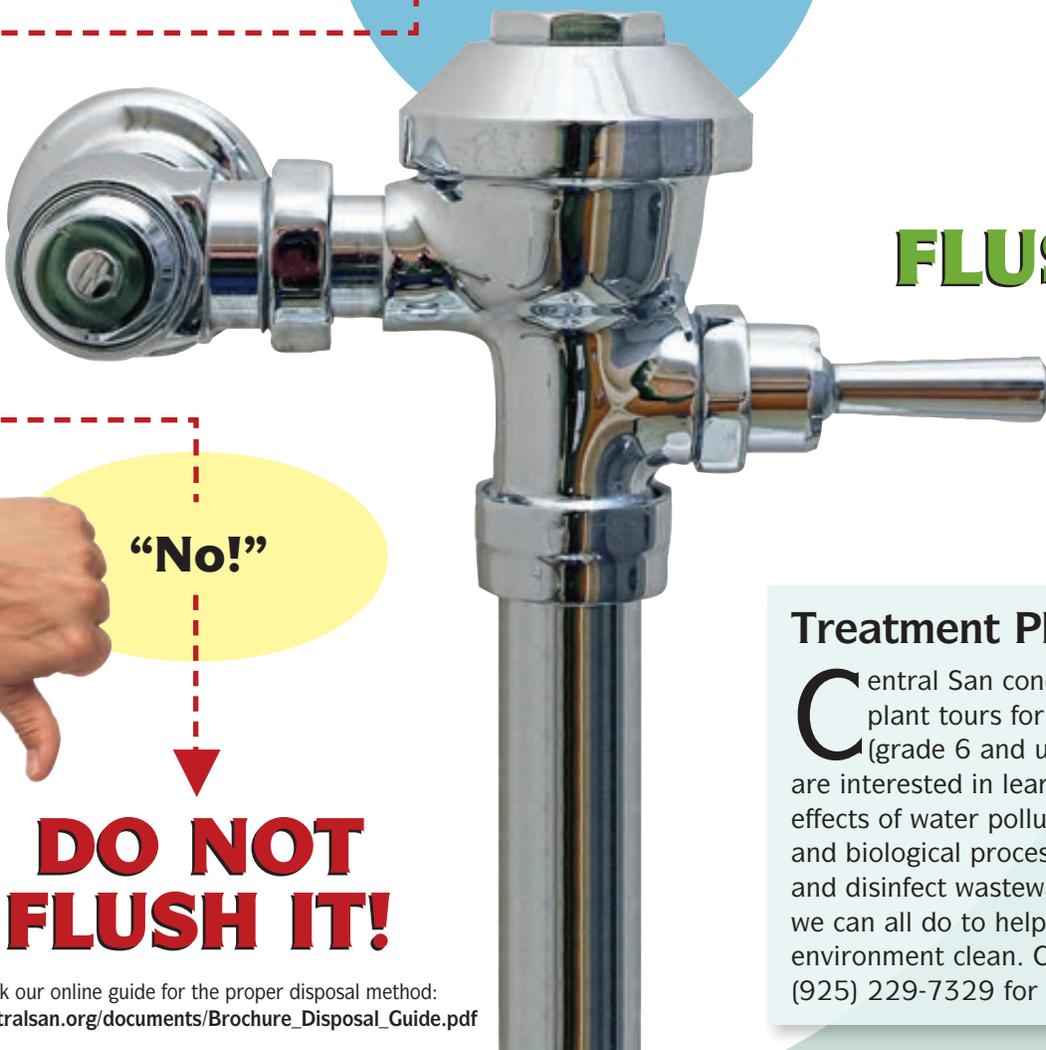
**“Yes!”**



**FLUSH IT!**

**“No!”**

**DO NOT  
FLUSH IT!**



## Treatment Plant Tours

Central San conducts free treatment plant tours for groups of students (grade 6 and up) and adults who are interested in learning about the effects of water pollution, the mechanical and biological processes we use to treat and disinfect wastewater, and what we can all do to help keep our water environment clean. Call Kit Ohlman at (925) 229-7329 for more information.

Check our online guide for the proper disposal method:  
[www.centalsan.org/documents/Brochure\\_Disposal\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.centalsan.org/documents/Brochure_Disposal_Guide.pdf)

## About CCCSD

Our mission as a Special District is to protect public health and the environment. We do this by collecting and treating wastewater, providing recycled water, and promoting pollution prevention. Our treatment plant in Martinez collects, treats, and disinfects an average of 40 million gallons of wastewater every day. Some treated wastewater is recycled (treated further) for irrigation use on golf courses and parks; the rest is released into Suisun Bay. We also operate a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility and sponsor 11 collection sites for the disposal of pharmaceuticals.

## Where to Call...

General information	(925) 228-9500 or <a href="http://www.centralsan.org">www.centralsan.org</a>
Sewer overflows	(925) 933-0955 or 933-0990
Treatment Plant InfoLine (Report Odors)	(925) 335-7703
Household Hazardous Waste InfoLine	(800) 646-1431
Sewer connection permits/Permit Counter	(925) 229-7371
To report illegal discharges into sewer system	(925) 229-7288 (during business hours) (925) 229-7214 (after hours)
Source Control	(925) 229-7288
Job Hotline	(925) 229-7109 or <a href="http://www.centralsan.org">www.centralsan.org</a>
Student Education Programs	(925) 229-7310 or <a href="http://www.centralsan.org">www.centralsan.org</a>
Public InfoLine	(925) 335-7702 or <a href="http://www.centralsan.org">www.centralsan.org</a>

### Board of Directors

**James A. Nejedly**, President

- **David R. Williams**, President Pro Tem
- **Paul H. Causey**, Director
- **Michael R. McGill**, Director
- **Tad J. Pilecki**, Director

Board meetings are open to the public and are held on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 2 p.m. in the CCCSD Board Room, 5019 Imhoff Place, Martinez.

**Curt W. Swanson**, Provisional General Manager



**CCCSD serves 461,100 customers within its 144-square-mile service area.**

-  Sewage collection and wastewater treatment (and HHW service) for 326,900 people
-  Wastewater treatment for 134,200 residents in Concord and Clayton by contract and HHW service
-  HHW disposal only
-  CCCSD's Headquarters, treatment plant, and HHW Collection Facility are located in Martinez

### The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District PIPELINE

Written and designed by CCCSD to communicate pollution prevention messages to the people and communities we serve

**Michael Scahill**, Editor • **Bonnie Lowe**, Writer  
**Charles Waltmire**, Graphic Designer

View archived issues online at [www.centralsan.org](http://www.centralsan.org)

**PIPELINE is printed with  
soy-based inks on Recycled Paper**

