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www.centralsan.org
CCCSD Gets New GM

Ann E. Farrell was appointed General Manager of the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District on March 31, 2012 by the District’s Board of Directors. She succeeds James M. Kelly, who retired.

Ann has worked for the District since 1999 when she was hired as its Director of Engineering. In that capacity, she oversaw the award-winning Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program, the Recycled Water Program, the construction of the massive Dougherty Valley tunnel and trunk sewer, and the recent completion of our new Collection System Operations facility in Walnut Creek.

Prior to coming to the District, Ann worked for a national engineering consulting firm designing wastewater treatment facilities for several cities and agencies in California.

She is a graduate of the University of Michigan where she earned a bachelor’s degree in Natural Resources, a bachelor’s in Environmental Engineering, and a master’s in Civil Engineering.

Ann and her husband have three adult sons and live in Lafayette. When her hectic schedule permits, she enjoys traveling, snow skiing, and cooking.

Go Ahead... Tell Us What You REALLY Think!

Customer Feedback: Our Most Valuable Tool

It seems like we’re just asking for trouble: contacting customers who have experienced a sewer problem or been inconvenienced by our sewer construction work. These can be frustrating situations, unlikely to leave anyone in a good mood. And yet, when those situations are fresh in people’s minds, we reach out and ask for their feedback. Why? Because there’s no better way for us to determine if we’re achieving our goal of providing exceptional customer service.

Whenever someone calls us to report an overflow, clog, or other problem with the sewer system, a crew is quickly dispatched (typically arriving within 45 minutes regardless of the location or time of day/night) to resolve that problem. Later, we follow up with those customers by sending them a survey to obtain their comments, suggestions, and feedback about the quality of the service we provided. We also send customer feedback surveys to people who experience our sewer construction work on their property or in their neighborhoods.

We do our best to minimize the inconveniences caused by our work, but we rely on this feedback to determine if we’re doing a good job in a timely and courteous manner; it is invaluable in helping us to measure and improve our quality of service.

The average overall rating given by our customers is midway between “Above Average” and “Outstanding.” Considering the less-than-pleasant circumstances that trigger our requests for feedback, that’s a rating we can be proud of. But we don’t take it for granted, and we always strive to do better.

We thank all of our customers who take the time to respond to our surveys and identify areas where we can improve. But you needn’t wait for a survey to tell us what you think. Contact us any time at (925) 335-7702 or via e-mail to webmail@centralsan.org. We always welcome and value your opinions. Our goal of providing exceptional customer service depends on them!

Operator Training Program Hits Milestone

The Water/Wastewater Operator Training Program that was established by Central San and nine other agencies in 2007 will mark its fifth anniversary this fall. Since its inception, the program has grown to 19 sponsoring agencies, and has offered 52 classes over the course of 10 semesters. Average enrollment in each of those classes was 19 students, 270 of them having taken multiple courses in the Certification program. Most important of all, several dozen students have found jobs in the wastewater or water industry after taking courses through the program. For more information on the Operator Training Program, including applications and testing schedules, check out the Bay Area Consortium for Water & Wastewater Education at www.BACWWE.org.
Your Toilet is Not a Trash Can

Please don’t use your toilet as a trash can. Flushing anything other than human waste and toilet paper can cause problems with your household plumbing, the main sewer lines, our wastewater treatment facilities, and the environment.

Keep this in mind: even if whatever you flush down the toilet disappears, the pipe through which it flows before reaching the public sewer main is only four inches in diameter. If that is even partially blocked by roots, grease or debris, it won’t take much to completely clog the pipe and cause a sewer backup. In addition to potentially causing clogs, many of the items people tend to flush contain toxic chemicals that can pollute local waters.

Here’s a list of commonly flushed items that should be put in the trash instead:

- **CAT LITTER.** Sinks to the bottom of pipes promoting sewer clogs. Even the “flushable” kind should not be flushed. Also, cat feces may contain toxoplasma gondii, a parasite harmful to marine mammals that is not removed by wastewater treatment.
- **CIGARETTE BUTTS.** Non-biodegradable and full of toxic chemicals.
- **CONDOMS.** They don’t break down in water and can get caught on roots or debris in pipes.
- **DENTAL FLOSS.** Another non-biodegradable item that can snag on roots or debris in pipes and trap other items.
- **DIAPERS.** Even the “flushable” kind can clog your pipes.
- **DRYER SHEETS.** Full of toxic chemicals; the synthetic fabric will not break down in water.
- **FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS.** Usually made of cotton which doesn’t break down easily and can clog your pipes.
- **TOILET BOWL SCRUBBER PADS.** Non-biodegradable and full of harsh cleaning chemicals.
- **WIPES.** Baby wipes, sanitizing wipes, facial wipes, etc.; even those labeled “disposable” or “flushable” can clog pipes (see page 5).

It’s easy to toss stuff in the toilet, flush, and forget. But this not only negatively impacts the environment, it can also be painfully expensive to fix.

Protect Water Quality: DO NOT Flush Your Drugs!

Bring unwanted medications to one of these collection 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.

For more information, call 1-800-646-1431 or visit [www.centralsan.org](http://www.centralsan.org).
Until fairly recently, most people did not realize that pharmaceuticals that get into the sewer system (when excreted from the body and when unwanted drugs are flushed or dumped down drains) are contributing toxic chemicals to the water environment. Our wastewater treatment plant is extremely effective at removing biodegradable wastes, but was not designed to address this broad spectrum of unregulated chemical pollution. This is why we’ve worked so hard to promote our Pharmaceutical Disposal Program (see the list of drop-off sites on page 3).

That program has already kept more than 38,000 pounds of unwanted pharmaceuticals out of the environment! But there’s a similar threat that is rapidly raising concerns: personal care products.

These products are comprised of a diverse collection of more than 80,000 chemical substances, and they are being produced and used in increasing volumes every year. They include:

- antibacterial soaps
- cosmetics
- deodorants & antiperspirants
- fragrances
- lotions
- hair care products
- nail polish & nail polish remover
- skin care products

It is believed that the chemical ingredients of many personal care products – which include acetone, benzaldehyde, benzyl acetate, benzyl alcohol, butylated hydroxyanisole, camphor, diethanolamine, ethyl acetate, formaldehyde, linalool, parabens, phthalates, triclosan and other toxins – can be harmful to the environment and wildlife.

As with pharmaceuticals, many of these chemicals will pass through the treatment process and enter local waters after being flushed down toilets, rinsed down sinks, or washed off people and clothing.

Here’s How You Can Help

- Buy products made with natural ingredients and avoid products that use chemicals like those mentioned above. Unfortunately, this isn’t easy; many personal care products do not list all of their ingredients. A helpful resource is www.ewg.org/skindeep.

- Dispose of personal care products as you would any other toxic chemicals: bring them to the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility. About 20% of the visitors to the facility bring personal care products along with paint, oil, pesticides, batteries and other hazardous wastes. [Note: the facility does not accept pharmaceuticals.]

- Do not pour or flush unwanted personal care products down the drain or toilet.
Unfortunately, it’s not a game. Clogged pipes can cause sewage overflows and costly damage to your property. But you can help prevent them by disposing of wipes in the trash, not the toilet.

- 30% of the sewage overflows in our service area last year were caused by wipes like these.
- So-called “flushable” or “disposable” wipes can clog your sewer pipes and damage wastewater treatment equipment.
- Wipes do not disintegrate in water as quickly as toilet paper and can get caught on roots or debris in pipes, causing blockages and overflows.
- If wipes can clog our large sewer mains, they can definitely clog your home’s much smaller sewer pipes, requiring you to pay a plumber to clear the blockage.
- No matter what a label says, the only items you should flush are human waste and toilet paper.
Ensuring that the wastewater we collect and treat is cleaned so that it poses no health risk to people or the environment is a huge responsibility. Although everyone at the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District contributes to this important mission, the members of our Plant Operations Department are on the front lines every day and night, at the core of our reason for being.

This team ensures our treatment plant operates safely and efficiently and that we comply with all federal, regional and state regulations.

They operate and maintain the equipment, oversee the complex treatment processes, and have accomplished an amazing feat: 14 consecutive years without a single violation of our stringent National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. That’s more than 180 billion gallons of wastewater successfully and safely treated by our plant before being discharged into Suisun Bay. When you consider that something as simple as an unexpected pump failure could result in a permit violation, you’ll understand how remarkable this achievement is.

How It’s Done

During each of three eight-hour shifts, a shift supervisor monitors all treatment plant processes and operations from a central control room, while three treatment plant operators patrol the plant, checking equipment and making adjustments to ensure everything runs smoothly 24 hours a day.

Back in the late 1970s, Central San became one of the nation’s first wastewater treatment plants to computerize its operations. Today it uses one of the industry’s most innovative computerized control systems.

Treating wastewater effectively enough to protect public health and the environment while meeting today’s water quality regulations is a very complicated process. At our large treatment plant, there are hundreds of functions and thousands of pieces of equipment involved, all connected by dozens of remote processors and miles of cable to a central control system.

We can’t control the flow of incoming wastewater, so everything at the treatment plant needs to smoothly adjust to increases and decreases in the flow. Our central computer controls and monitors things like pump operations, water levels, chemical doses, temperatures, pressures, and so on.

When something isn’t functioning as desired, this central control system sends an alarm so our treatment plant operators can respond immediately to identify the problem and correct it. If necessary, the department’s skilled electricians, mechanics, or machinists can quickly perform repairs.

But even the best computerized systems can’t monitor everything, and if pollutants were allowed to slip through our treatment processes unnoticed, there could be undesirable consequences. Fortunately, the Plant Operations Department has a team of scientists who perform about 40,000 tests each year at our award-winning Environmental Laboratory to ensure that the treated wastewater is environmentally safe and complies with all water quality regulations.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act requires that we carefully monitor more than 125 pollutants, including mercury, pesticides, and other toxic contaminants. Very minute traces of pollutants like these can kill sensitive marine organisms and cause harm to the entire food chain.

Water is tested coming into the plant, during the treatment process, before it leaves the plant, and at the discharge point into Suisun Bay. We also monitor
our incinerator exhaust to ensure it meets all air quality requirements. Adjustments to the treatment processes can be made, if necessary, based on the results of those tests.

**In Summary**
The members of our Plant Operations Department work tirelessly together to ensure that every aspect of our wastewater treatment process functions safely and efficiently to achieve our ultimate goal of protecting public health and the environment.

**CCCSD Wins Peak Performance Award**
Fourteen consecutive years of 100% success in ensuring every drop of wastewater we treated met federal, state and regional water quality standards as it was discharged into Suisun Bay – that’s what winning the National Association of Clean Water Agencies Platinum-14 Peak Performance Award means. It’s a distinction earned by only a handful of wastewater agencies nationwide, and we couldn’t have done it without your help. Thank you for properly disposing of household hazardous wastes and keeping pollutants out of the sewer and environment!

**District Awarded for Safety**
The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District recently won two awards for its Safety Program:

- **The 2011 Large Plant Safety Award** from the California Water Environment Association. This award recognizes our Plant Operation Department’s comprehensive safety training program, its overall safety record, and its promotion of a safety culture throughout the organization.

- **The George W. Burke, Jr. Facility Safety Award** from the Water Environment Foundation. This award recognizes a wastewater facility for establishing and maintaining an active and effective safety program.
Oddities at the HHW Facility

You won’t believe some of the oddities our staff has encountered at the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Facility!

The facility receives thousands of visits each year (39,760 visits in 2011), and due to the nature of the materials brought in for disposal (the word “hazardous” is a good clue), the staff is highly trained to recognize and safely respond to potentially dangerous items such as unstable chemicals that could be explosive (the county bomb squad has been called to the facility 11 times since it opened in 1997).

But how should they respond to Poop Freeze? Buckets of blood? Half-naked men? Babies with long, scaly tails? It takes more than courage to work at the HHW Facility – often curiosity and a sense of humor are necessary, as well!

“Poop Freeze won us a Golden Bung Award from the North American Hazardous Materials Management Association,” said HHW Supervisor David Wyatt. “The award recognizes odd wastes brought to HHW facilities. The Poop Freeze can says ‘Just frost and toss!’ People freeze pet waste with it to make it easier to pick up. It’s pretty funny.”

Not so funny was when the staff received what appeared to be a bucket full of body parts and blood! (Much of what they unload from people’s vehicles are closed containers; they don’t find out what’s in them until later.) They decided to take the bucket and its contents to the County Coroner for identification. Fortunately, he determined it was a pork shoulder concoction, likely to be used as chum by a local fisherman.

At least that was brought in by someone wearing clothes. Senior HHW Technician Winston Ingram recalled this odd encounter: “The first month I was here, a customer came in to drop off waste and he was wearing nothing but a bath towel!”

Then there’s the woman whose baby had a tail. “She came into the Reuse Room talking softly to something she was carrying wrapped in a baby blanket,” said HHW Technician Matthew Thomas. “Imagine my surprise when I noticed a scaly tail protruding from the blanket!” The woman’s “baby” turned out to be her pet monitor lizard.

Experiencing strange situations like these is all in a day’s work for our HHW Collection Facility staff.

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
Holiday Hours: Closed September 3; November 12.
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.
How to Avoid a Nasty Mess

Each year in the U.S., more than 89,000 families experience a sewer problem.* Imagine your bathroom fouled by raw sewage overflowing from the toilet or shower drain.

Here’s something you can do to help prevent that: make sure an Overflow Protection Device is installed on the private side-sewer (lateral) that connects your home to the public sewer main.

With such a device installed, sewage backing up in the pipe from the direction of the street will be released into your yard rather than through drains in your home. However, if the pipe is clogged between your drain and the device, your sewage will back up into your home; so do all you can to prevent such clogs. (See page 3.)

Overflow Protection Devices are available at plumbing supply stores. We recommend they be installed by a licensed plumber.

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

*Based on 2009 U.S. Census American Housing Survey data.

Stop Using Plastic Bags & Bottles

From floating plastic trash in the middle of the ocean to tiny pieces of degraded plastic washing up on beaches, plastic pollution is pervading our waters and killing more than 100,000 marine animals – including sea birds, turtles, whales and dolphins – every year.

Plastic bags and bottles contribute heavily to the formation of a quagmire of plastic debris in the North Pacific Ocean known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, estimated to be twice the size of Texas.

Plastic bags and bottles are now the most common types of litter worldwide. They are made using non-renewable resources (either petroleum or natural gas). They take huge amounts of energy to manufacture, transport across the country, and recycle.

They can take from 400 to 1,000 years to decompose, but their chemical residues remain in the environment forever.

Here’s How You Can Help

- Stop using plastic bags. Buy reusable fabric bags (choose those made of natural or recycled materials). Keep them in your car so you’ll always have them when you go shopping.
- Stop buying bottled water. Don’t believe advertising that implies bottled water is safer than tap water. Use a refillable, nonplastic bottle. Use a carbon filter if it improves tap water taste.
- Recycle efficiently. Determine which plastics your municipality recycles and sort them accordingly.
- Take part in voluntary beach cleanups of plastic debris.
- Encourage local businesses to stop using plastic bags.

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.
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 455,400 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 2012 CIPP/Sliplining Project is renovating sewers in South Main Street between Newell and Hill Road in Walnut Creek; in Lancaster Road between Westwood Court and Orchard Lane; and on the Shell Refinery Property and east along Marina Vista to Highway I-680 in Martinez. Expected completion: October 2012.

**Orinda**

The North Orinda Sewer Renovations Project, Phase 4, is renovating sewers in the El Toyonal and Claremont Avenue areas of North Orinda. Expected completion: January 2013.

**Walnut Creek**

The Walnut Creek Sewer Renovation Project, Phase 9, is renovating sewers in the Rudgear Road, Hawthorne Drive and Mountain View Boulevard areas. Expected completion: January 2013.

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.

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**New Sewer Rates Implemented**

A $30 increase in the annual residential Sewer Service Charge became effective July 1, 2012, making the rate $371 (just under $31 per month) for fiscal year 2012-2013. The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District Board of Directors approved this scheduled increase last year at a public hearing on June 2, 2011.

The Sewer Service Charge is collected by the County on the annual property tax bill as a line item labeled “CCCSD SEWER CHG.” It provides approximately 60% of our overall revenue and covers the cost of collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater for 455,400 residents and businesses in Central Contra Costa County. In addition, it helps fund our infrastructure improvements as well as operation of our Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility in Martinez.

For that $31 per month, our customers receive continuous, reliable sewer service; the use of an award-winning Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility where oil, paints, pesticides, batteries and other hazardous materials are safely disposed of; a pharmaceutical disposal program (see Page 3); a professional, well-trained staff dedicated to providing exceptional customer service 24 hours a day; and valuable information about preventing pollution and protecting the environment.

We work hard to identify ways to save money and provide maximum value while maintaining, repairing, and renewing the massive infrastructure those services require.

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

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**Excellence in Accounting**

The District recently won its 12th consecutive Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association. This certificate is the highest form of recognition in the field of governmental accounting and financial reporting.
What to Do if Your Sewer/Water Service is Disrupted

Several earthquake faults run through the beautiful East Bay area in which we live and work. If a disaster occurs, it may be several days before emergency services and government agencies are able to respond. Water and sewer lines may be broken and handling your personal human waste becomes very important for your family’s health and safety.

Here’s what you need to know and do:

Assemble these products for a sanitation kit:
- Toilet paper
- Wipes and hand sanitizers (choose biodegradable/disposable ones)
- Heavy-duty plastic garbage bags and ties
- Five-gallon plastic bucket with tight lid
- Toilet seat (optional, for use with bucket)
- Deodorizing chemicals (household bleach, baking soda, kitty litter, camp chemicals, or powdered quick lime)
- Small shovel (to dig outdoor latrine, if necessary)
- Heavy-duty gloves
- Breathing mask

If water lines are broken or there is no water:
- Do NOT flush the toilet.
- Shut off water to your home (learn where the main valve is and how to shut if off before disaster strikes) to prevent contaminated water from entering your water system.
- Remove the water from the toilet bowl (scoop into bucket).
- Line toilet bowl with double-bagged garbage bags to collect waste.
- Add a deodorizing chemical per solid deposit or at least twice a day.

If the toilet can’t be used or it’s unsafe to enter your bathroom:
- Use a sturdy 5-gallon bucket with a tight-fitting lid and an optional toilet seat.
- Line it with a double-bagged garbage bags to collect waste.
- Add a deodorizing chemical per solid deposit or at least twice a day.

If you do not have a plastic bucket:
- Dig a latrine or trench 2 to 3 feet deep in your yard away from the house.
- Cover the waste with a layer of deodorizing chemical and dirt each time it is used.

Storage and disposal of human waste:
- Periodically remove the bagged waste, add 1/4 cup of bleach, and seal the bag.
- Label the bag “HUMAN WASTE.”
- Store the bags and garbage cans containing them well away from the house, out of direct sunlight.
- Final disposal can be by burying or by sanitary sewer when notified by public health officials. Do not burn human waste.

When to begin using your toilet:
- Pay attention to public service announcements about conditions in YOUR neighborhood.

Always thoroughly wash and sanitize your hands after handling bags and buckets full of waste.

Learn more about emergency preparedness at www.RedCross.org

Need a Guest Speaker for Your Group?
If your audience would be interested in hearing about CCCSD and our water pollution prevention efforts, we may be able to help. 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.
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 45 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 pharmaceutical disposal collection sites.

### Where to Call...

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<tr>
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<th>Phone Numbers</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<td>General information</td>
<td>(925) 228-9500 or <a href="http://www.centralsan.org">www.centralsan.org</a></td>
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<td>Sewer overflows</td>
<td>(925) 933-0955 or 933-0990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment Plant InfoLine (Report Odors)</td>
<td>(925) 335-7703</td>
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<td>Household Hazardous Waste InfoLine</td>
<td>(800) 646-1431</td>
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<td>Sewer connection permits/Permit Counter</td>
<td>(925) 229-7371</td>
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<td>To report illegal discharges into sewer system</td>
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<td>Source Control</td>
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### CCCSD serves 461,100 customers within its 140-square-mile service area.

- **Sewage collection and wastewater treatment (and HHW service) for 328,857 people**
- **Wastewater treatment for 134,202 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

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