

WASHINGTON COUNTY SERVICE AUTHORITY IN THE PIPE

NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 2020

No. 32

Working Today to Address the Challenges of Tomorrow

WCSA's strategic plan addresses innovation and expansion goals for continued success in serving Washington County

This year has brought unexpected trials for all of us, from the coronavirus pandemic to severe weather resulting in landslides and flooding, just to name a couple. At WCSA, we have worked hard to mitigate COVID-19 transmission risk to keep our customers and employees safe, while also continuing to provide reliable services to our customers, despite the rough weather.

At the same time, we have also steadily moved forward with our strategic planning process to prepare for the challenges that face the WCSA of tomorrow.

In our May and August newsletters, we discussed our goals of continuing to meet the needs of an aging water system by maintaining a reliable infrastructure; recruiting, developing and retaining a best-in-class team; being good stewards of financial resources; and improving internal and external communications.

Two additional goals include leveraging technology to support effective operations and, as WCSA has done for more than a century, growing where expansion is both feasible and desirable.

WCSA manages water and wastewater transport across significant elevation changes, which is energy intensive and requires approximately 100 pumping and pressure-reducing stations. As a result, WCSA will continue to explore energy efficiency upgrades and optimization opportunities, and stay abreast of new and emerging technologies.



In addition, because technological innovation helps employees make better decisions and provides a better customer experience, WCSA is considering solutions for all branches of the organization, from customer service to process optimization. These solutions include asset-based accounting to support enhanced business system needs and communications technology.

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WCSA Project Updates

To learn more about WCSA projects, visit www.wcsawater.com.

Recently Completed Projects:

The **Sugar Cove Road Water Line Extension Project** involved installation of 6,000 feet of 4- and 6-inch water line and a booster pump station for providing water service to 12 residences that were relying on wells and springs. The project was completed in September.



Area of the recently completed Sugar Cove Road Water Line Expansion Project

The **Abingdon Water Storage Tank Improvements Project** will provide a new 1.5 million gallon tank, which will directly impact approximately 6,600 water connections. The project is funded by USDA Rural Development. The project is scheduled to be completed by July of 2021.

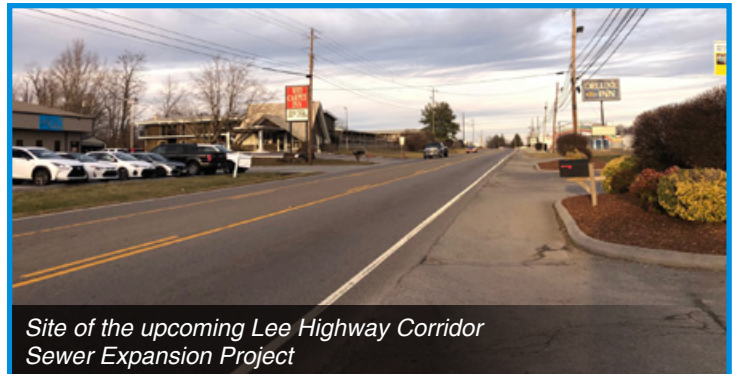


Valve and piping assembly for the new Abingdon Water Storage Tank

Upcoming Projects:

The **Galvanized Line Replacement — Phase 3 Project** is the third step in a three-phase project to replace all galvanized pipe in WCSA's distribution system over the next several years. The project is widespread across Washington County and will consist of seven divisions. Construction is expected to begin this month and be completed by spring of 2022. The approximately \$30 million project is funded by USDA Rural Development.

The **Lee Highway Corridor Sewer Expansion Project** will extend public sewer service to residents and businesses along Lee Highway between Exit 13 and the city of Bristol, Virginia. The first phase of the project is currently in the preliminary design stage. The project, which is funded by USDA Rural Development, is expected to begin in the spring of 2022 and be completed by summer of 2023. 💧



Site of the upcoming Lee Highway Corridor Sewer Expansion Project

Ongoing Projects:

The **Meter Replacement Project** will replace all water meters throughout WCSA's system with new non-metallic ultrasonic meters, combined with Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) technology. This new system will automatically collect readings multiple times a day, as well as on-demand, and will eliminate drive-by readings. It will also provide customers with greater access to their water usage data throughout each billing period. The project is currently underway and expected to be completed by summer of 2021.

The **Hidden Valley Phase 2 Project** will extend water service to 31 additional residences currently relying on wells and springs. The project is funded by the Virginia Department of Health, the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, and the Department of Housing and Community Development, and is expected to be completed by June of 2021.

Vacuum Breakers:

A Simple Way to Prevent Backflow from Garden Hoses

We all commonly use garden hoses to water our lawns and flowers, wash our cars, bathe our pets and fill our swimming pools. They're also sometimes used to apply pesticides in our yards.

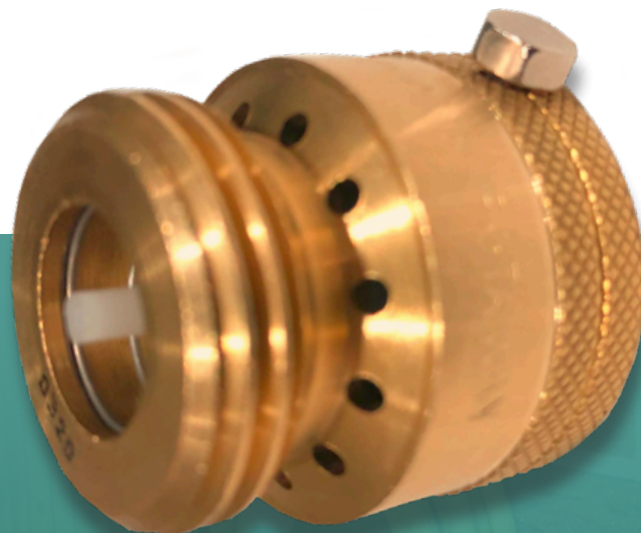
Because these hoses are connected to our homes' water supplies, there is a potential risk for backflow of contaminated water into our homes or wells, or even worse, our neighborhood water or municipal water supply. Backflow is the backward flow of water from the garden hose into the water supply, and can occur if there is a sudden demand on the water system due to a leak, a fire truck pumping from a hydrant or a system pump failure.

Backflow can also occur if the spray nozzle on a hose is turned off while the water to the hose is still left on, such as when we put the hose down for a minute while washing the car. In this case, the hose will be fully pressurized, and even the smallest drop in a home's water pressure could cause the water to flow backward. Even if the water pressure does not drop, a hose lying in the sun will heat up and cause the water pressure within the hose to increase to a level greater than the water system pressure, thereby creating a backflow situation.

Using a simple, inexpensive vacuum breaker on your hose bibb (exterior spigot) can help avoid this hazard. A Hose Vacuum Breaker (HVB) is a simple device that screws onto your hose bibb. It does not interfere with the use of the garden hose and allows the water to flow normally, but opens and vents to the atmosphere if a pressure reversal occurs.

Water in a garden hose can be drawn back into our water supply in many ways. An HVB is a simple and inexpensive way to prevent this from occurring.

By taking steps to prevent backflow, you are not only protecting your neighbors and other WCSA customers, you are protecting members of your own household. For more information, please contact WCSA at 276-628-7151. 💧



Challenges of Tomorrow

Continued from Page 1

"Systematic innovation in technology is an important component of ensuring continued success as a resilient service provider," says Robbie Cornett, general manager. "We are working to integrate new technology services and systems, and enhance training processes for new and existing staff. This also includes additional training and utilization of our existing technology packages to effectively harvest data, and to remain responsive to customer and operational needs."

WCSA will also pursue opportunities for feasible growth and expansion. Strategies for supporting additional growth include identifying areas of need within the community and extending service to previously unserved citizens, supporting industrial

recruiting efforts, considering regional opportunities with neighboring utilities where desirable, and implementing process improvements for tracking requests from and commitments to prospective customers.

"The services provided by WCSA are central to assuring the sustained vitality of our service area," Cornett said. "In addition to our continued provision of infrastructure maintenance and replacement, we have also invested available resources to support anticipated growth by county leaders. We are committed to a goal-oriented approach to progress in order to ensure that high quality and reliable service can be provided to this region for many years to come." 💧



WCSA's Water Meter Replacement Project Will Improve Billing Efficiency and Service to Customers

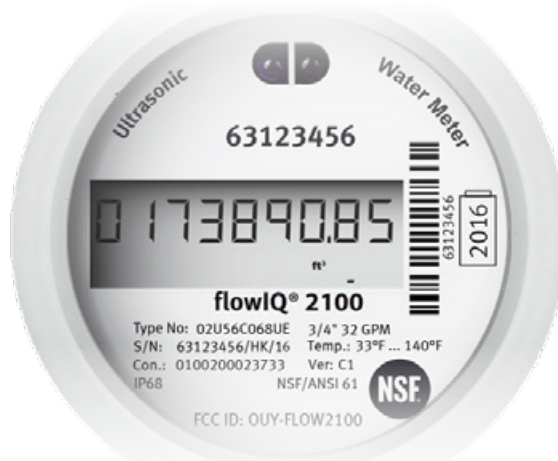
As part of its strategic plan, WCSA has launched a meter replacement project for its water customers. This investment will replace aging infrastructure that has reached the end of its useful life and accomplish one of WCSA's long-term goals. The project will replace all meters up to two inches in size throughout WCSA's system. New meters help ensure our ability to meet the current and future needs of our customers.

Like many things, with age comes deterioration, and over time a water meter will begin to slow and eventually stop. In addition, some areas of our county experience higher water pressure due to elevation changes, and meters must be able to withstand those higher-pressure demands. Our goal is to have meters that perform reliably and accurately throughout their projected 15-year lifespan.

All meters will be replaced during Phase 1 of the project, which is currently underway and expected to conclude in early 2021. Customers will be notified by mail (due to COVID-19) two to three weeks in advance of their meters being replaced.

WCSA is replacing existing meters with non-metallic ultrasonic meters. The accuracy of these meters does not degrade over time. The new meters also allow for additional customer-centric opportunities. Until the new meters have been installed system-wide, WCSA will continue to perform monthly drive-by readings.

WCSA has elected to install smart water meter technology using Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI). This system will automatically collect readings multiple times a day, as well as on-demand, and will



eliminate drive-by readings. Implementation of this technology will take place during Phase 2 of the project, and the system is scheduled to go live later in 2021.

In addition, American Electric Power (AEP) is deploying its own AMI network and has chosen Itron as its network partner and service provider. With AEP's consent, Itron has offered WCSA the opportunity to utilize the AMI network in AEP's service area, which covers approximately 80% of WCSA's water distribution system. The shared network infrastructure will reduce WCSA's cost of ownership (construction, operation and maintenance) and result in significantly improved coverage.

Once the AMI network is fully operational, utility customers can expect greater access to their water usage data throughout a billing period, which will allow them to monitor their day-to-day consumption, and provide early water leak detection capability and access to usage history.

For additional information about this project, please contact WCSA's customer service department, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 276-628-7151.

UPDATE: WCSA's Response to COVID-19

Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the lobby of WCSA's administrative office in Abingdon, Virginia, will remain closed to the public until further notice. However, our drive-through window remains open to customers, and we continue to offer extended business hours, which are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday (except holidays).

In addition to our drive-through window, customers may have their service needs met through the following options:

- Phone: 276-628-7151 (M-F, 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.)
- Email: inquiry@wcsa-water.com
- Auto draft, online and phone payments (24/7) by credit/debit card or e-check
- Drop box located at our drive-through window and foyer (24/7)



WCSA Calendar

WCSA offices will be closed on the following holidays:

Thanksgiving	Nov. 26 and 27
Christmas	Dec. 25
New Year's Day	Jan. 1
Presidents' Day	Feb. 15



Board Meetings

UPCOMING BOARD MEETING DATES

Nov. 23, 2020
Dec. 21, 2020
Jan. 25, 2021

Board meetings are held at WCSA in the E.W. Potts Board Room at 6 p.m. The public is welcome to attend.

Actual dates may vary. Please contact our office to confirm meeting schedule.

Customer Contact Information

Should WCSA need to contact you regarding your water service, we generally do so via text message, email or telephone. If you prefer not to be contacted by one or more of these methods, please call our office at 276-628-7151.

If you would like to be contacted but are not sure we have your information, please contact us at 276-628-7151 or inquiry@wcsa-water.com with that information.

E-CHECK PAYMENTS

WCSA NOW OFFERS A 24/7 E-CHECK METHOD FOR PHONE AND ONLINE PAYMENTS. YOU MAY PAY BY CALLING 276-628-7151 AND CHOOSING OPTION 2, OR BY ACCESSING YOUR ONLINE ACCOUNT. CALL CUSTOMER SERVICE AT 276-628-7151 FOR DETAILS.

WCSA

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