

Currents



Tasting Water



News and Developments for Customers of the Macon Water Authority

The value of Macon Water evident in 2012 MWA rates

Rates among the lowest in Georgia, without sacrificing investments in quality infrastructure

The Macon Water Authority (MWA) Board of Directors, following extensive financial analysis, has passed a resolution to adopt new water and sewer rates and related fees for the 2012 calendar year.

The new MWA rates/fee schedule will feature a small percentage increase to customer water and sewer variable rates or consumption charges. Variable rates for water and sewer will increase by 10 cents in 2012. MWA customers will pay no more than \$1.82 per CCF for water and \$1.96 per CCF for sewer – the top tier of rates for the highest level of monthly consumption for both. (One unit or CCF is equal to 100 cubic feet or 748 gallons.)

The value of MWA drinking water, even in light of the current rate increases, is undeniable, especially when considering the enormous cost of maintaining the integrity of the Authority's water and sewer infrastructure, says Tony Rojas, Executive Director of the MWA.

Most residential customers also will see a slight increase to the base fee for sewer services in 2012, though there will be no increase to the base fee for water. The one-time monthly base fee for sewer services will increase by \$1.25. For more specific details on variable rates/consumption charges and base fees for MWA water and sewer services,



MWA Customer Service Agent Beth LeBlanc (left) assists an Authority customer in making a payment. Photo by Lisa Vaughn.

customers can log onto www.maconwater.org.

A noticeable benefit to residential customers in the 2012 rate structure is the cap the MWA Board has placed on their sewer consumption charges. Residential sewer customers without an irrigation meter will pay variable rates based on 80 percent of their water consumption, though these sewer consumption charges will be capped at 30 CCF.

Those MWA residential customers with an irrigation meter will pay NO sewer consumption charges for water use metered through their irrigation meter and will pay for sewer consumption on only 95 percent of the water registered through their residential

water meter each month.

“Due to long-term planning by the Board for the renewal and replacement of assets, the Authority is able to reinvest revenues from small, incremental rate increases into water and sewer system upgrades and improvements, without having to impose large rate hikes in order to do so,” adds Rojas. “As a result, any necessary rate increases are intended to be less burdensome on our customers.”

Even with the rate increases adopted for 2012, MWA water and sewer rates are among the lowest and most competitive in the state, and the MWA is one of the few utilities that discount sewer services at less than 100 percent of meter readings and place a cap on consumption charges, according to a rate comparison study conducted by the Environmental Finance Center on behalf of the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority.

When comparing the value of America's Best Tasting Drinking Water (as awarded by AWWA in 2009) produced by the MWA to the cost of bottled water, the figures are shockingly disproportionate. The cost of 748 gallons of MWA water – which is the equivalent of 5,665 bottles of (16.9 ounce) water – is \$1.72. By comparison, the average retail price (\$1.25) of 748 gallons of bottled water is \$7,081.

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As the number of volunteers continues to increase, so too does the impact of Ocmulgee Alive!

A record crowd of volunteers rolled up their collective sleeves on October 22, to help clean portions of the Ocmulgee River. All of those involved in the river cleanup could see the positive impact of their work



Because of the interstate and frontage road nearby, there was plenty of debris collected from a site at the Riverside Cemetery during the 2011 Ocmulgee Alive!

after the successful completion of the seventh annual Ocmulgee Alive!

The 345 participants in the 2011 Ocmulgee Alive! are nearly 10 times the amount of volunteers who worked the first event seven years ago, says Mark Wyzalek, Director of Laboratory/Environmental Compliance for the MWA and an organizer of Ocmulgee Alive! The event was the ninth largest of the 224 Rivers Alive events held throughout Georgia in 2011.

“The Macon Water Authority joined Keep Macon-Bibb Beautiful and New Town Macon to plan the first Ocmulgee Alive! about eight years ago,” says Wyzalek. “Our first event had 35 volunteers, but that number has grown tremendously, enabling us to make a significant impact on the cleanliness and water quality of the Ocmulgee.”

The work force volunteering for Macon's annual river cleanup since that first event also includes employees from YKK, USA, Inc. and Graphic Packaging International, as primary sponsors, as well as volunteers from the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, the Ocmulgee River Initiative, the Georgia Wilderness Society, Mercer University, and others.

Jim Spry, EQA Manager for YKK, says his company has been involved in Ocmulgee Alive! for four years now, noting that the



A group from YKK collects several bags, a shopping cart, and other debris from the river during the 2011 cleanup, Ocmulgee Alive!

event “is important to YKK because we want to support the community, the Macon Water Authority, and most importantly, our environment.”

Most of what ends up in the Ocmulgee River is trash coming off of the Interstate and area roadways, which is easily preventable, notes Wyzalek. MWA customers can do their part to reduce pollution entering the Ocmulgee and other area waterways by properly disposing of their trash.

SECOND FRONT

Making the Grade: All A's for the MWA

MWA employees and operations recognized with industry awards at GAWP Fall Conference

The Macon Water Authority's (MWA) most recent industry report card is in, and the utility brought home all A's during the Fall Conference of the Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP), held Nov. 14-16, in Athens.

The MWA received a 2011 Gold Award for its Wastewater Collection System, which is the highest honor for sewer systems in the state. The MWA attained a quantitative score of 95 or higher from the review of its system by industry judges.

The MWA Kids Fishing Derby, with a quantitative score of 96, received the 2011 Best Innovative Initiative Award in Public Education for hosting the best (and most unique) special event designed to educate the public about the water industry. The Kids Fishing Derby was held on Saturday, June 4, with a record crowd of 600 participants enjoying the event.

The MWA also received a 2011 Certificate of Distinguished Achievement for its annual Ocmulgee Alive! (See story on page 1.) The river cleanup scored a 95 to receive this distinction as one of the best industry-sponsored special events of the year, held in conjunction with the statewide Rivers Alive campaign. Another record crowd of 345 volunteers took part in the river cleanup on



Heather Veal (right), CMOM Coordinator for the MWA, receives the Gold Award for the Authority's Sewer Collection System during the GAWP Fall Conference from MWA Executive Director Tony Rojas, who is GAWP President this year.

Saturday, October 22.

Finally, the Authority's Ray Simmons was inducted into the GAWP Golden Manhole Society for exemplary service to the industry and the professional association, joining Heather Veal (2010), Mike Beard (2009), and Darryl Macy (2006), as previous inductees.



Darryl Macy, MWA Manager of Sewer Collection and Water Distribution, weighs award winning catches during the Kids Fishing Derby, held on June 4 of this year. This special event was selected by the GAWP as the state's Best Innovative Initiative in Public Education.

The MWA competes most often within the large system category for GAWP awards, which provides the stiffest competition. In addition, the threshold for receiving industry awards from GAWP is rising, making it more and more difficult to attain statewide recognition for program achievement. Certificates of excellence for facilities or operations have required a minimum grade of 85 in the past, whereas the minimum grade is 90, or in some cases 95, to receive such recognition today.

MWA Water Efficiency Program coming to fruition

Beginning in August, the Macon Water Authority (MWA) commissioned Cavanaugh & Associates to conduct a "Top Down" Water Audit of its system, under IWA/AWWA industry standards, with the intent to develop a subsequent Water Efficiency Program as a result. The MWA and staff from Cavanaugh & Associates are in the final phase of that three-part process.

Water Audits are essential for public water utilities such as the MWA to quantify their system efficiencies and water resources, while better understanding their operational and financial implications. Water Efficiency Programming is helpful in the ongoing effective management of water loss and non-revenue water, as well as being recognized globally as best practices for utility management.

The first phase of the project gathered available financial and operational data to develop a Water Balance for the audit year. The volume of non-revenue water for this benchmark was calculated and categorized as either water loss or authorized-but-unbilled consumption, such as fire-fighting and system flushing.

The second phase of the Water Audit

process included an in-depth analysis and staff interviews pertaining to the Authority's billing accounts and methods, customer metering database and methods, distribution system management, and SCADA system capabilities. Recommendations were developed from the analysis and interview process that will serve as the framework for the ongoing Water Efficiency Program.

The third phase of the project, initiated in November, represents the implementation of the Water Efficiency Program, manifested in part through a series of monthly Water Efficiency Team meetings. The Team will serve as the engine for the Program, prioritizing, executing and evaluating the improvement measures identified in phase two. Additionally, the Team will be responsible for developing new improvement measures for advanced Water Loss Control, as those from phase two of this project are successfully completed.

The Water Efficiency Program will provide the MWA with the means to show measured improvement of its system's water efficiency to its rate-payers, governing board, and regulatory agencies. As a result of the Water Efficiency Program, the MWA

ultimately will enjoy improved efficiencies in its delivery of treated water to customers, improved reliability in its data, increased knowledge of the distribution system's performance, increased knowledge of its customer metering and billing systems, and enhanced stewardship and protection of available water resources.



A crew from the MWA and Cavanaugh & Associates performs a field inspection of an existing bulk customer meter, to verify meter condition and configuration of piping connections.

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