



# Currents



News and Developments for Customers of the Macon Water Authority

## Macon-Bibb stormwater needs are ahead of available funding

The Macon Water Authority (MWA) and Macon-Bibb County Government have a mutual interest in stormwater management and the rehabilitation of critical stormwater assets.

Since 2008, the MWA has assisted Macon-Bibb County by providing technical support and program management services for projects to rehabilitate stormwater infrastructure. The funding for these stormwater projects has come from Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) dollars - with the first voter referendum passing in 2005 and the latest in 2011.

All of the current stormwater management services provided by the MWA, in addition to the rehabilitation projects, are being funded by the 2011 SPLOST, which will cap at \$14 million whenever that sales tax revenue is reached between now and when the SPLOST collection expires in 2017.

But what has become crystal clear to MWA officials as they address stormwater projects is that the need for stormwater system rehabilitation and upgrades far outweighs available funding.

After completing several rehabilitation projects, MWA is discovering that critical portions of the stormwater system are on the verge of failing, due to infrastructure far exceeding its life expectancy.

For example, a majority of the stormwater



Storm water issue before project work by MWA.



Storm water problem solved by MWA.

system in Macon's downtown business district consists of brick stormwater sewers, which in some cases were constructed by hand nearly 100 years ago. Other portions of the stormwater system in Macon-Bibb consist of metal corrugated pipe, which likewise has in many cases exceeded its life expectancy and deteriorated to the point of failure.

Compounding the challenges of the stormwater system rehabilitation in progress are instances of collapsing infrastructure and sinkholes, facilitating the need for emergency repairs that must be added to the SPLOST stormwater project list.

Although there are not enough funds from the current SPLOST to address all of the needs to

rehabilitate failing stormwater infrastructure, a number of successful projects either have been completed or are underway.

To date, approximately \$9 million of the \$11.8 million SPLOST budget, which the MWA is managing, has been invested in stormwater rehab projects that are either finished or are in the process of being designed or constructed.

Emergency repairs have been completed downtown at Third Street and Cherry, Third Street and Hemlock, and Second Street and Giles, in addition to Buford Road in Macon. Repairs also have been completed on Key Street and Misty Vail Court, thanks to accelerated construction of these previously identified SPLOST projects.

## Please think before you pour grease down the sink!

You can help us prevent sewer spills and overflows by properly disposing of your household grease.

For more information, check out our website at [www.maconwater.org](http://www.maconwater.org).

## MWA bonds to raise \$30 million for sewer

During its October meeting, the Macon Water Authority (MWA) Board of Directors approved a Master Bond Resolution that will garner an aggregate total of \$30 million over the course of the next few years for



The MWA recently installed a new valve (pictured) for the 30-inch force main that runs to the Rocky Creek Water Reclamation Facility. This upgrade to MWA wastewater infrastructure is the type of project that will be funded with dollars raised from the Series 2015 Bond Issue, which is the first of three planned bond issues totaling \$30 million over the next few years.

reinvestment in the utility's two wastewater treatment facilities.

The first portion of the planned \$30 million in water and sewer revenue bonds is underway, as the Authority will close on a \$10 million Series 2015 Bond Issue by the end of the year.

The MWA is reinvesting these dollars into its wastewater treatment facilities in order to enhance operations at the respective facilities, improve existing treatment processes, and assure wastewater treatment capacity and efficiency are available for existing customers and those looking to locate to Macon-Bibb County.

Authority officials note that opportunities for economic development and prosperity for Macon-Bibb and Middle Georgia are enhanced by the dependability and capability of MWA wastewater treatment facilities and operations.

## Strategic Planning critical to MWA future

The MWA is in the midst of a four-month strategic planning process, which will provide input for the Authority's five-year Strategic Plan.

MWA strategic planning will address the sustainability of affordable and reliable utility services, operations, facilities, and



MWA employees participate in a strategic planning workshop, providing important insights that will complement feedback the Authority also is gathering from community leaders and customers.

related infrastructure in the future.

Extensive research and preparations will be critical to the success of the strategic plan.

During the first week of November, the Authority held an Employee Strategic Planning Workshop to gather input and insights on how to improve utility operations moving forward.

In addition, the MWA distributed online surveys to its management team and community leaders in other local governments, agencies, and organizations.

"We want to seek input from individuals who recognize the value of having a first-class water and sewer utility," says Tony Rojas, MWA Executive Director and President. "Different perspectives, ideas, and feedback are important to us and to the strategic planning process."

# SECOND FRONT

## MWA Budget, Rates set for 2016

During its September meeting, the Macon Water Authority (MWA) Board of Directors adopted the utility's budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, which began October 1.

Earlier this year, the Authority also approved a five-year capital improvement plan, with \$8.5 million in capital projects – improvements to the water and sewer system on behalf of customers – included in the FY 2016 Budget.

Total revenues for 2016 are anticipated to be approximately \$51 million, which is a 4.7% increase over revenues from last year, while expenses are budgeted at \$43.2 million.

Every year, the MWA adopts a five-year rate plan, which forecasts rates to garner revenues necessary to

operate the utility in compliance with the highest industry standards and to reinvest in much needed infrastructure and assets.

When new water and sewer rates become effective Jan. 1, 2016, MWA customers will see a slight increase in their volumetric (consumption) rate for water and sewer of \$0.10 (or 10 cents) per CCF (a unit of consumption equivalent to 750 gallons). In addition, customers will experience a flat-fee increase of \$0.50 (or 50 cents) in their base charge for standard residential meters (5/8-inch to 1-inch in size).

For a complete overview of MWA rates, fees and charges – for residential and non-residential customers in Macon-Bibb and neighboring counties – check out our website at [www.maconwater.org](http://www.maconwater.org).



## MWA Honors and Accolades

The Macon Water Authority (MWA) has been the recipient of several industry awards recently, indicating the utility's excellence in operations and financial reporting as a water and sewer utility.

### Awards as Water Professionals

During its Fall Conference held in Athens on Nov. 17-18, the Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP) recognized the MWA with the 2015 Collection System Platinum Award.

This coveted honor is awarded only to sewer systems that have attained a grade of 95% or higher on an industry review of operations for five consecutive years. This year, only five utilities in the state received the GAWP Collection System Platinum Award, putting the MWA in elite company.

In addition, the MWA Amerson Water Treatment Plant Laboratory received the GAWP Certificate of Distinguished Merit. This Certificate was given to the MWA for having one of the best water quality laboratories in the state, within the large system

category (serving more than 100,000 people).



The MWA Finance Department has been recognized for attaining the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 18th consecutive year. Those water professionals responsible include (left to right): Pauline Forbes (Financial Analyst), Mary Brezjal (Buyer), Rena Self (Accounts Payable), Doricale Smith (Accountant), Arleen Samuels (Accounting & Purchasing Manager), and Guy Boyle, Executive Vice President for Business Development.

### Award in Financial Reporting

This fall, the MWA Finance Department received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 18th consecutive year. This award reflects the quality of the Authority's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), as judged by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada.

The GFOA also recognized the MWA with the Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting (PAFR). The MWA has published a PAFR for the past three years, as this document provides a consolidated version of the more lengthy and financially detailed CAFR. The intent of the PAFR is to provide an easier-to-read, defined overview of MWA financials and system operations, while educating customers, prospective industry, and other audiences, about the strong financial position of the Authority.



Darryl Macy (left), MWA Manager of Sewer Conveyance and Water Distribution, and Heather Veal (right), CMOM Coordinator, received the 2015 Collection System Platinum Award on behalf of MWA from GAWP President Bill Zieburz.

## MWA Public Outreach

### Rain doesn't dampen enthusiasm for Ocmulgee Alive!

Macon's annual river cleanup this year might best be described as "cleanups" – with the postponement, or continuation, of Ocmulgee Alive!

Due to inclement weather on the originally scheduled date (October 10), the 2015 Ocmulgee Alive! was moved back a week to Oct. 17. No worries though, as the rain didn't dampen the enthusiasm of more than 300 volunteers, who helped clean the Ocmulgee River and nearby streams during both weekends.

Employees from YKK stayed and worked through the inclement weather on Oct. 10, while other volunteers returned the following Saturday to finish the job. YKK has been a corporate sponsor of Ocmulgee Alive! for several years, along with Graphic Packaging International and Coca Cola Refreshments. In addition, KaMin Performance Minerals was a first-time sponsor this year.

This annual river cleanup, which is affiliated with the statewide Rivers Alive Program, was organized by the MWA along with NewTown Macon and Keep Macon-Bibb Beautiful.

Participating organizations in the

2015 Ocmulgee Alive! also included National Park Service/Ocmulgee National Monument, Historic Riverside Cemetery Conservancy, Macon-Bibb Cooperative Extension, Mount de Sales Academy, Tattnall Square Academy, and the Altamaha River Keepers.

### Make-End Maker Festival

The MWA also took part in the Make-End Maker Festival, held at Tattnall Square Park in Macon during the weekend of Nov. 14-15. The Authority was one of the sponsors of this event, providing a water station and educating participants about MWA services.

The name "Make-End" describes the festival as a "weekend of making." The three main features of the festival included interactive exhibits, entrepreneurial speakers, and a large-scale, 30-foot tall fire-breathing robot.

This festival, which is organized by the College Hill Alliance, is designed to showcase makers from across the country and reinforce that Macon-Bibb County is a place where creative people and innovators can thrive.



Students from Mount de Sales Academy show the results of their handiwork after volunteering for the 2015 Ocmulgee Alive!

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