

SPRING 2022

PIPE LINE

VOLUME 26 NUMBER 1

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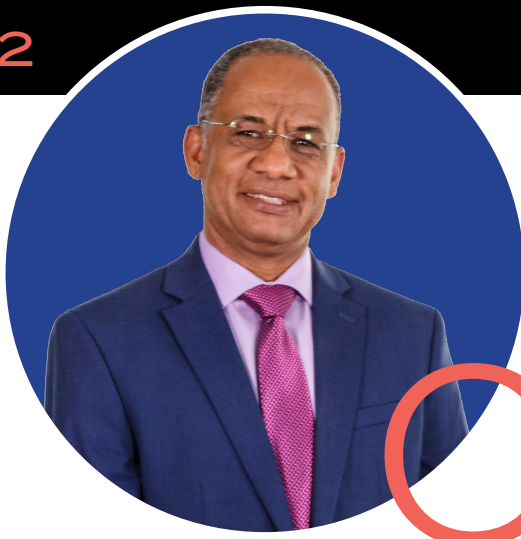
RECORD-SMASHING HHW
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PROTECTING OUR WATERS

Central San cleans billions of gallons of wastewater every year—and that’s just the beginning. Through science, education, and advocacy, we’re tackling the challenges of water pollution.





GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE

NEXT LEVEL STEWARDSHIP

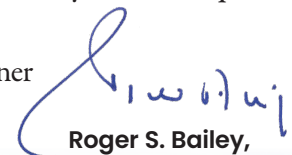
Central San operates on a basic premise: **We are an industry leader.** What that means to me is that we excel at our core services, and we deliver beyond what is expected or required for our customers. This commitment to excellence is reflected in our environmental stewardship. “Good enough” is just not good enough.

Of course, protecting the environment is at the heart of what we do. Every year we collect and clean more than 13 billion gallons of wastewater before returning the cleaned water safely back to the environment. Recently, we were honored with the Peak Performance Award - Platinum 23 from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, recognizing our 23rd consecutive year without a single permit violation. That’s a record achieved by fewer than 20 of the over 16,000 publicly owned treatment facilities in the United States.

However, meeting our regulatory requirements is just part of the picture. We’re exploring innovative ways to “green” our infrastructure, promote sustainability, and identify and address our contributions to climate change. This includes upgrading our aging recycled water production and storage facilities to ensure continued reliability and support expanded capacity for the future. We’re also preparing to harness more solar energy to help power our operations, and we’re laying the groundwork for new anaerobic digestion facilities that would convert waste to energy.

We’re also committed to providing industry-leading pollution prevention programs and outreach. I invite you to read more about some of these efforts in this issue of *Pipeline*. Through research and advocacy, we’re working with statewide partners to address the challenge of microplastics, per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) chemicals, and other pollutants in California’s waterways (read more on pages 6-9). We’re designing award-winning school education programs that model the principles of resource recovery for thousands of local students (page 13). We also are preparing to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility, which this past fiscal year collected a record-smashing 2.7 million pounds of waste (page 10).

None of these efforts would be possible without you, our customers. We’re thankful to partner with you in building a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable future.



Roger S. Bailey,
General Manager





CENTRAL SAN HONORED FOR 23 YEARS OF 100% PERMIT COMPLIANCE

All wastewater agencies in the U.S. must meet stringent federal, state, and local water quality standards. Here at Central San, we work hard to ensure that every drop of water we clean meets or surpasses these standards before we discharge it into beautiful Suisun Bay. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, in 2020 we cleaned millions of gallons of wastewater every single day while continuing to maintain 100% compliance with our National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit.

In recognition of this achievement, this past fall we were honored with the 2020 Peak Performance Award - Platinum 23 from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies.

This award reflects Central San's 23rd consecutive year without a single permit violation—the longest successful streak of any wastewater utility in California and tied for 9th in the nation.

We couldn't have achieved this milestone without you! Thank you for helping to keep pollutants out of our sewer system and waterways.



After 23 years of 100% permit compliance, we still work hard every day to meet the highest environmental standards (although we're running out of wall space!)

NEIGHBORHOOD UPGRADES

Central San regularly maintains, repairs, or replaces sewer lines and other parts of our wastewater collection system to ensure trouble-free service for our customers. Our construction projects may cause short-term inconveniences, but they provide long-term benefits for you and your neighbors. We appreciate your understanding!

Here's what we're currently working on (estimated completion dates in parentheses).

NORTH ORINDA, PHASE 8 will replace approximately 2.0 miles of sewers primarily in Camino Sobrante, Altarinda Road, and Bien Venida, as well as various locations in Orinda, north of Interstate 24. (May 2022)

DANVILLE, PHASE 4 will replace approximately 1.75 miles of sewers primarily in the Greenbrook, Del Amigo, Creeks of Alamo, and Camille neighborhoods of Danville and Alamo. (December 2022)

WALNUT CREEK, PHASE 16 will replace approximately 2.0 miles of sewers in the Castle Hill, Walnut Creek Estates, San Miguel, Larkey Park, and Pleasant Valley neighborhoods of Walnut Creek. (January 2023)

MARTINEZ, PHASE 7 will replace approximately 1.25 miles of sewers along Alhambra Avenue (Escobar Street to Soto Street and C Street to F Street) as well as on Escobar Street (Alhambra Avenue to Berrellesa Street). (February 2023)

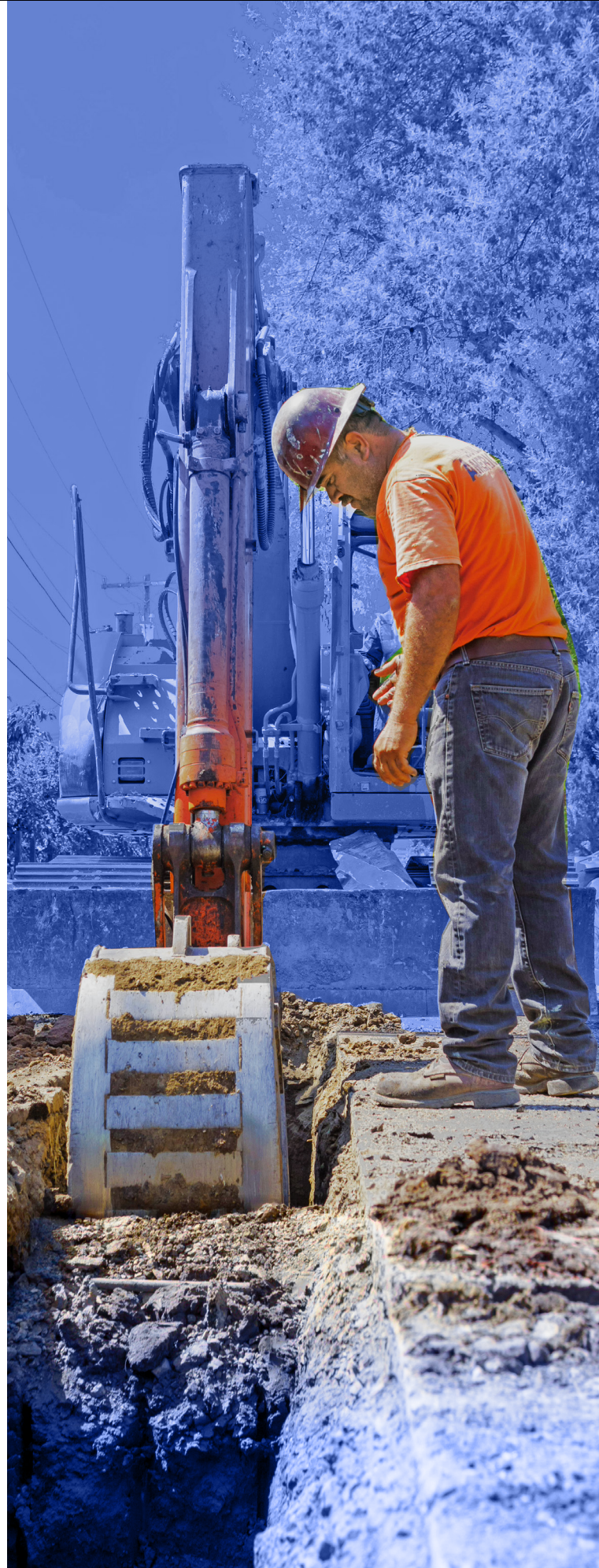
SOUTH ORINDA, PHASE 9 will replace approximately 2.0 miles of sewers primarily in Overhill Road, Scenic Drive, Valley Drive, Leslee Lane, and Lavenida Drive, as well as various locations in Orinda, south of Interstate 24. (March 2023)

PUMP STATION UPGRADES PROJECT, PHASE 1 will renovate or replace major mechanical, electrical, and controls equipment at three pump stations in Orinda and Moraga. (April 2022)

PUMP STATION UPGRADES PROJECT, PHASE 2 will renovate or replace major mechanical, electrical, and controls equipment at three pump stations in Martinez. (December 2024)

SAN RAMON PUMP STATION ELECTRICAL UPGRADES will replace major electrical equipment at a pump station in San Ramon. (December 2023)

To learn more about these or other construction projects, please contact Senior Community Affairs Representative Chris Carpenter at (925) 229-7200 or ccarp@centralsan.org, or visit: centralsan.org/construction



EXPLORE CENTRAL SAN'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY EXPERIENCE



Central San is celebrating 75 years of service to the community, and we invite you to join us—**virtually!** Our award-winning 75th Anniversary Experience features an interactive 360-degree tour of our wastewater treatment plant and other facilities, videos, photo galleries, fun facts, and a learning hub with hands-on science activities for kids.

Drop by online, explore, click, and learn more about what it takes to collect and clean more than 13 billion gallons of wastewater every year. You might even discover a hidden prize!

Visit the Virtual Experience at: centralsan.org/75th



WINNER!

2021 Innovation Award

*Municipal Information
Systems Association of
California*

**2021 Community
Engagement and Outreach
Project of the Year**

*California Water Environment
Association*

JOIN US FOR AN ONLINE GUIDED TOUR AND Q&A EVENT

Where does the dirty water from your toilet, sink, or shower go? And what happens to all of the, um, stuff in it? Here's your chance to get answers to your questions about how we do what we do. Join us for an online guided tour through our 75th Anniversary Experience and learn more about how we make dirty water clean again through engineering and science. All ages welcome!

Wednesday, May 11, 2022, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Register at: centralsan.org/75th

Interested in scheduling a virtual tour/Q&A event for your organization, group, or class? Contact Ben Lavender at blavender@centralsan.org or (925) 768-2857.

CONNECT WITH US!

Follow Central San for upcoming tours and events, pollution prevention tips, news, photos, and more.



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@centralsandist



@centralsandist



@centralsandist

BETTER LABELING FOR WIPES IS ON THE WAY

Good news! Much clearer disposal information for wet wipes is coming to store shelves near you. This past fall, Governor Newsom signed AB 818 by Assembly Member Richard Bloom into law, establishing the strongest “Do Not Flush” wipes labeling and public education requirements in the country.

Starting this July 2022, diaper, cleaning, cosmetic, and other disposable wet wipes packages must include a “Do Not Flush” symbol and warning on each package. The bill, which results from years of legislative work, also requires wipes manufacturers to help educate the public on the impacts of flushing wipes.

This is a huge win for consumers, our pipes, and the environment. Unlike toilet paper, most wipes don’t break down in water. They remain intact as they pass through our sewer system, causing costly clogs, overflows, and equipment malfunctions. A 2019 study by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies estimated that California wastewater utilities spend around \$50 million annually to remove wipes from the sewers—costs ultimately borne by our customers. On top of the harm to our infrastructure, flushed wipes can also harm the environment by shedding tiny fibers that contribute to microplastics pollution in our waterways.

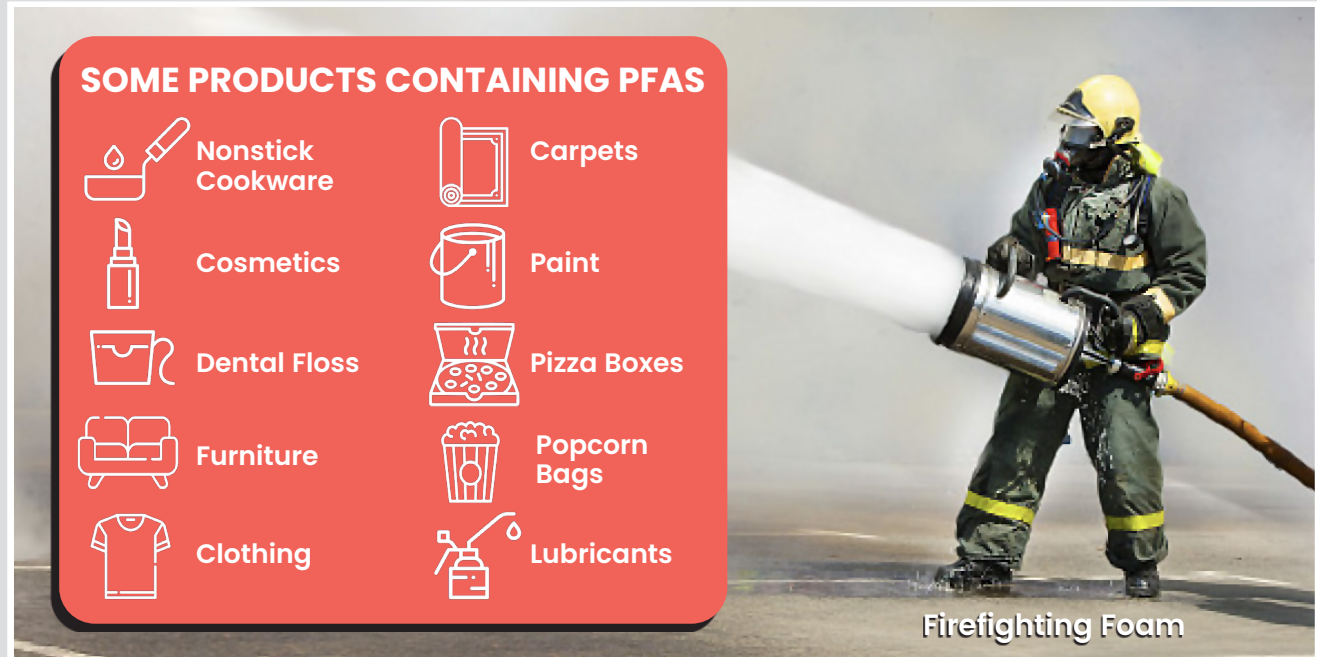
For all these reasons, Central San has actively advocated for better wipes labeling, along with our partners across the state. The new law is a major step forward in our fight to keep wipes intended for the trash can out of our public sewer systems.



Thanks to new labeling requirements, our customers will soon have more straightforward information about how to safely dispose of wipes. Look for the “Do Not Flush” symbol starting this summer.



FACING THE CHALLENGE OF PFAS POLLUTANTS



Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are man-made, “forever” chemicals that have been shown to harm the environment and human health. PFAS have been in commercial use since the 1940s and are abundant in today’s society. They are found in many common household products such as nonstick cookware, furniture, clothing, carpets, cosmetics, and food packaging. Although the U.S. has banned some types of PFAS, there are still nearly 5,000 types in use.

PFAS contain some of the strongest chemical bonds known to science. Because of their durability, they can travel long distances and persist in the environment for decades, polluting our air, water, and soil. Scientists have found them all over the globe, from polar ice to the dust in our homes. Unfortunately, once PFAS enter the environment, there’s no magic bullet to eliminate them.

Because PFAS are ubiquitous in our homes and environment, it’s no surprise that they also make their way into the wastewater stream. This is a challenge because current treatment technologies are not designed to remove PFAS. To better understand the impacts of PFAS in wastewater,

Central San is participating in regional research efforts examining how the chemical compounds move through the treatment process, as well as how to best measure and monitor them. With so many types of PFAS in use, scientists are still unsure even what we should be looking for.

One thing is certain: The best solution to PFAS pollution is at the source, by keeping it out of the environment to begin with.

That’s why Central San is supporting state legislation that would limit the use of PFAS where safer alternatives are available. California already has taken a big step forward by phasing out firefighting foams containing PFAS, starting this year. We’re also supporting legislation that would require manufacturers to disclose which products contain PFAS. This will empower California consumers to make safer decisions for themselves, their families, and the environment.

Along with our partners across the state, we’ll continue to push for better information for consumers and for holding big polluters accountable for clean-up. Watch for future updates.

MEASURING MICROPLASTICS



Microplastics are some of the world's most pervasive and troubling pollutants, finding their way into water, soil, air, wildlife, and humans. These tiny particles come from many sources, including larger plastic debris that breaks down into smaller pieces over time. When plastics are washed down the drain or flushed down the toilet, they travel to our treatment plant. Although our treatment processes remove most plastic from wastewater, tiny microplastics can pass through our plant and end up in Suisun Bay.

Because microplastics come in numerous sizes, shapes, colors, and chemical compositions, even measuring how much is in our wastewater is no simple task. This past year, Central San participated in a pilot study headed by Southern California Coastal Water Research Project to help develop standardized sampling methods for microplastics. The research is part of a statewide effort to develop effective strategies for managing microplastics in California's coastal waters.

For the study, our Laboratory team collected samples from different points in our treatment process over 24-hour periods. The team filtered the water through stacks of sieves with varying meshes designed to capture microparticles of different sizes. The samples were then sent to a specialized lab for analysis.

Central San was the first agency in California to test the sampling protocols and equipment in a real-world treatment plant. Through repeated testing, we were able to iron out some kinks in the process and modify the sampling apparatus to improve its reliability. We also produced a training video to document our process for other wastewater utilities to follow.

Finding reliable means of measuring microplastics in wastewater is an essential step to understanding how best to manage them. The next phase of the study will look at the effectiveness of different wastewater treatment methods in removing these troublesome pollutants. We will continue to update you as we learn more.

While there's still much we don't know about microplastics, one thing we do know is that the best place to address the problem is at the source. Using fewer plastics to begin with is the single most effective step we can take to prevent plastic pollution.

“
We need to move away from plastics wherever we can. It's better for our health, and better for the health of our aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.”

– Mary Lou Esparza, Central San Laboratory Program Administrator





WHAT CAN YOU DO?

REDUCING, REUSING, AND RECYCLING are the best ways to stem the tide of plastics into our waterways and oceans.

SAY NO TO SINGLE-USE PLASTICS. Much of what ends up as plastic pollution are items we use only once before discarding. (Think plastic grocery bags, cups, straws, take-out containers, and packaging.) Avoid single-use plastics by carrying your own reusable shopping bags, stainless steel water bottle, cutlery, and coffee mug. Consider the packaging when making a purchase, and encourage your favorite businesses and brands to use less plastic.

RECYCLE PLASTICS PROPERLY. Not all plastics are created equal. Look for the number on the bottom to see if it's recyclable, and check with your curbside recycling service to see what materials they accept. Pick up litter (especially plastic) when you see it and put it in a recycling or trash bin.

REMEMBER THAT TOILETS ARE NOT TRASH CANS. All too often, we find plastic materials that shouldn't be flushed in our sewer system and treatment plant. This includes wipes, diapers, tampon applicators, dental floss, and condoms. If it's not human waste or toilet paper, please put it in the trash.

A RECORD YEAR FOR HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION



A whopping 2,714,931 pounds!

That's how much household hazardous waste you, our customers, brought us this most recent fiscal year (July 2020- June 2021).

That's the largest single-year total in the history of our Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Our team served an average of 124 cars per day during that period, which is also a new record.

Every pound of waste brought to our collection facility helps keep pollutants out of sewers, storm drains, and landfills. On top of that, we were able to recycle and beneficially use more than 80% of the materials collected during the year, while safely disposing of the rest.

We're especially gratified by our customers' high level of participation in the program, given all the challenges of the pandemic over the past couple years. Thank you for visiting and for helping to keep our community clean and healthy!

Spring Cleaning? We Can Help!

Has your spring cleaning unearthed old paint, dead batteries, used oil, unwanted home and garden products, and more? We're here to help! Bring us your household hazardous waste, and we'll take care of the rest. For details on what we accept and how to drop off your waste, please visit our website or call our hotline: centralsan.org/hhw or (800) 646-1431



GET FREE RECYCLED WATER FOR YOUR GARDEN

Kee your garden happy while helping save our precious local drinking water supplies! Central San offers recycled water at no extra charge for our residential customers. This water is ideal for hand-watering trees, flowers, lawns, and container plants. Read on if you want to save water, save on your water bill—and possibly save that neglected succulent sitting on your porch.

Our Residential Recycled Water Fill Station is located behind our Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility at 4797 Imhoff Place, Martinez. The station is open Monday through Saturday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Hours may fluctuate during rainy weather and holidays, so please call ahead to confirm we're open: (925) 335-7717.



Before filling up for the first time, you'll need to fill out the Residential Recycled Water Fill Station Use Application/Agreement and receive a brief training on the use of recycled water. We encourage you to read and complete the form before your visit. Download a copy at: centralsan.org/recycledwater



Bring your own containers. They must be made specifically to hold liquids, be a minimum size of one gallon, have watertight lids, and be secured for safe transport.



The maximum fill per trip is 300 gallons. There is no limit on the number of trips. Keep in mind that water is heavy! Ten gallons weigh more than 80 pounds; 100 gallons weigh more than 800 pounds. When driving vehicles with such heavy loads, expect less stability and be sure to allow for extra stopping distance.



Finally, please note that recycled water should not be consumed or allowed to run off into storm drains.

For more information, visit centralsan.org/recycledwater or call (925) 335-7717.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION FACILITY



4797 Imhoff Place, Martinez, CA 94553
1-800-646-1431

RESIDENTS: Monday–Saturday, 7 a.m. – 2 p.m.

REUSE ROOM: Monday–Saturday, 7 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

BUSINESSES: Monday–Saturday, by appointment

HOLIDAY CLOSURES: May 30, July 4, September 5, November 11

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility
& Residential Recycled Water Filling Station



ELIGIBLE COMMUNITIES

Alamo, Blackhawk, Clayton, Clyde, Concord, 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.

ADDING AN ADU? CALL US FIRST!

New state laws are making it easier than ever for homeowners to add accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to help address California's housing crunch and provide more affordable housing. ADUs include granny flats, in-law units, backyard cottages, and other secondary residential units added to an existing single-family home or property. While the new regulations limit municipal impact fees and relax zoning requirements for many ADUs, your project may still require sewer connection/capacity fees, sewer service charges, and permits from Central San. It all depends on the type, size, and features of the unit you're planning to build.

We want to help you avoid unwanted surprises. Before beginning construction, contact Central San to learn more about sewer installation requirements and options for connecting your ADU to our system. Our friendly Permit Counter staff will be happy to prepare an estimate of fees and charges and answer your questions about the sewer permitting process. For more information, visit: centralsan.org/permitting

BOARD ADOPTS NEW ELECTION DIVISION BOUNDARIES

Central San's Board of Directors adopted new election division boundaries at its meeting on December 2, 2021. The division boundaries were updated based on data from the 2020 Census to reflect how local populations have changed over the past ten years.

Redistricting determines which neighborhoods or communities are grouped together into a division for the purposes of electing a Board member and ensures that each Board member represents about the same number of constituents. Central San held three public hearings to seek input from residents on the new boundaries, which will be in effect beginning with this year's 2022 election cycle.

Central San transitioned from an "at-large" to an area-based "by-division" election system in 2020 under the California Voting Rights Act.

To learn more about the redistricting process and view an interactive map to find your Board division, visit: centralsan.org/elections

SEWER ISSUE? LET US KNOW!

Central San cleans billions of gallons of wastewater every year. But before we can clean it, it needs to arrive! Wastewater often travels miles to reach our treatment plant. To help ensure a smooth journey, we continually inspect, clean, and maintain our vast system of underground sewer pipes. Although we work hard to make sure every drop reaches us safely, sometimes stuff happens. If you notice any of the following issues, please let us know.

Overflows: Central San has one of the best reliability records in the state. Overflows are rare, but they do occur. If you see, smell, or suspect a sewage overflow or spill, call us immediately at (925) 933-0990. We'll send a crew to investigate as soon as possible.

Odors: We take steps to manage odors throughout the treatment process, but occasionally they are still noticeable. Luckily, our Odor Hotline is available to report any smells that impact your commute, jog, shopping trip, or coffee date. Call us at (925) 335-7703.

Troublesome Covers: Central San has more than 38,000 maintenance access covers (a.k.a. "manholes") throughout our service area that we use to access and maintain our pipes. The covers are built to last, but over time some may sit unevenly in the street, creating noise or tripping hazards. If you notice a cover in need of repair or adjustment, contact us at (925) 933-0990.

What does an overflow look like?

Here is a picture of an overflow created by Central San's overflow simulator.



CLEANING OUT THE EDUCATION CLOSET



CENTRAL SAN
EDUCATION
CENTRALSAN.ORG/LEARN

While our school programs moved online over the last two years, our classroom materials have been waiting in our education closet for the opportunity to go out to schools again. As we have begun to carefully resume our in-classroom programs, we are cleaning out our education closet in preparation.

You might be surprised by the supplies you'd find in there. Many are solid wastes diverted from landfill. We've purposefully designed our programs this way to model the principles of resource recovery. Resource recovery is the idea that the things we throw away or send down our drain are not simply wastes that need to be disposed of, but rather, resources that can be recovered, recycled, and re-used.

What do our classroom supplies look like? It depends on the program. When simplicity is key, we rely on cups, old food packaging, or used water bottles. When measurement and precision are necessary, we use donated biotech tools like test tubes, racks, and beakers. When we want to incorporate technology into our lessons, we use retired Central San electronics like old cellphones and tablets. These supplies come from our own systems, local reuse nonprofits, and the household consumption habitats of our employees and partners.

Using a resource recovery model proved very useful during the pandemic. It allowed us to create hands-on, distance learning lessons using common household items. This ensured that nearly everyone already had the necessary materials at home to participate in our virtual programs.

Creating lessons from simple, low-cost, easy-to-access materials is ideal for our in-classroom programs, too. This approach ensures each and every student enjoys a rich, hands-on experience. They're free to experiment, make a mess, learn, and have fun.

Central San is proud to be inspiring students with examples of resource recovery in action—and proud to be a leader in wastewater education. For the most up-to-date information about our different education programs and offerings, please visit centralsan.org/learn or contact Ben Lavender at (925) 768-2857 or blavender@centralsan.org.



Before and after: Central San's retired field devices get a second life in local classrooms.



COLORFUL COVERS

Thank you to all our young (and young-at-heart) customers who sent us your colorful maintenance access cover art!

Central San has more than 38,000 maintenance access covers in our service area that we use to inspect, clean, and maintain over 1,500 miles of underground sewer pipes. In celebration of our 75th anniversary, we created a new cover design and invited *Pipeline* readers to help us decorate it. We received so many great submissions it was tough to pick just a handful to publish. We appreciate everyone who participated for sharing their creativity and showing our infrastructure some love!



Graham, Age 3



Madeline, Age 13



Lauren, Age 7



Nadjib, Age 13



Meira, Age 7



Evelyn, Age 8



Logan, Age 10



Marina, Age 12



Christine, Age 78



WE LOVE EARTH

Toot the Talking Toilet loves the Earth. This planet is home to many wonderful things, all connected in exciting ways. Whether it's a hummingbird pollinating flowers or a squirrel burying acorns, every action has an effect on our environment.

Believe it or not, this even includes flushing the toilet! When you flush, the wastewater travels to Central San's treatment plant. We clean the water and return it to nature so it can be used all over again. You can help protect our planet by only flushing the three p's: pee, poop, and (toilet) paper.

Word Bank

Español	English
pipí	pee
agua	water
flor	flower
baño	toilet
sol	sun
caca	poop

h b a ñ o z d p n
 w b g j f r s o l
 a a u l ñ d u o x
 t u a f t h n p í
 e s e l s p m u v
 r f l o w e r ñ p
 n c k r a e y v i
 t o i l e t f x p
 o c a c a l i y í

pi

*Hi Kids!
 Can you help me find
 the words hidden in this
 puzzle? Find them all
 and win a prize!*



Age: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____



Cut out this page and mail to:

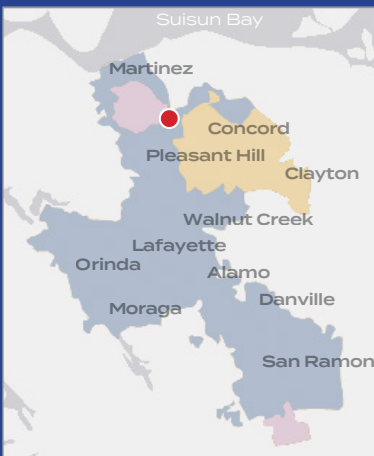
*Toot the Toilet
 Central San
 5019 Imhoff Place
 Martinez, CA 94553*



WE ARE HERE TO HELP

General Information	(925) 228-9500 or CentralSan.org
Sewer Overflows	(925) 933-0990
Recycled Water Fill Station InfoLine	(925) 335-7717
Treatment Plant InfoLine (Report Odors)	(925) 335-7703
Household Hazardous Waste InfoLine	(800) 646-1431 or CentralSan.org/HHW
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)
Environmental Compliance	(925) 229-7288
Employment Opportunities	CentralSan.org/Careers
Student Education Programs	(925) 335-7723 or CentralSan.org/Learn
Community Information Line	(925) 335-7702

Board meetings are open to the public and are usually held on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 2:30 p.m. in the Central San Board Room, 5019 Imhoff Place, Martinez. Meetings can be live-streamed at centralsan.org



Central San serves nearly half a million customers within its 146-square-mile service area.

- Wastewater collection & treatment; Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) disposal.
- Wastewater treatment & HHW disposal in Concord & Clayton by contract.
- HHW disposal only.
- Central San headquarters, treatment plant, HHW Facility & Residential Recycled Water Fill Station.

The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District

PIPELINE

Written and designed by Central San staff to communicate pollution prevention messages to the people and communities we serve.

Ann Vallée, Editor, Writer
Charles Waltmire, Graphic Designer
Joseph Zumbo, Photographer

View archived issues at CentralSan.org



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