

# IN THE PIPE

NEWSLETTER

Summer/Fall 2013

## 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

No. 3

## Who is the Washington County Service Authority? (Part 2)



*This is the second in a series of articles about the Washington County Service Authority – providing you a general overview of who we serve, how we serve, and some of what is involved in providing these services. The first installment was published in the Spring/Summer issue of In the Pipe.*

### WCSA’s Revenues and Expenses

#### Revenues

WCSA is almost exclusively funded through the sale of its **water** and **sewer** services (connection and monthly user fees). Other than an occasional grant, WCSA receives *no* outside financial support. WCSA often obtains low-interest loans from governmental agencies such as Rural Development or the Virginia Department of Health, but these loans must be repaid with money earned through the sale of services by WCSA. **Water** and **sewer** connection and monthly user fees (revenues) pay *all* WCSA expenses.

#### Expenses

WCSA expenses (revenue requirements) can be placed under two headings: (1) growth-related and (2) non-growth-related. These revenue requirements are outlined as follows:

Growth-related revenue requirements are capital projects that add capacity to the **water** and **sewer** system or service extensions. These projects facilitate residential, commercial and industrial growth in Washington County.

Non-growth-related revenue requirements are capital projects related to replacement of the existing **water** and **sewer** systems and the operation and maintenance of the existing **water** and **sewer** system. The replacement, operation and maintenance of the **water** and **sewer** systems ensure that existing customers’ needs are met.

Our annual operating budget is approximately \$10 million. For this reason, WCSA commits itself to continuous improvement. This not only involves regular internal analysis of cost-saving measures, but periodically submitting ourselves to review by outside firms to identify measures that will save money but not compromise quality.

#### Capital Projects

Since 1996, WCSA has completed or is working on more than 200 projects costing \$95.94 million. Of the \$95.94 million, approximately \$59.8 million has been growth related, and \$36.1 million has been non-growth related. From 1996 to 2006, WCSA completed \$37.17 million worth of capital projects. From 2007 to October 2012 (six years), WCSA began or completed \$58.77 million in capital projects, of which \$8.19 million was in grant and the remaining \$50.58 million was loan.



#### Rates

How WCSA is funded, capital projects, operation and maintenance all come together in our rates, fees and charges (what we charge for the services we provide). There are different ways to structure rates. For example, a utility with little water/sewer capacity, and limited ability

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to obtain more, may implement rates to compel water conservation. This is not the WCSA method.

Another structure is what we think of as the traditional model, where essentially all of the revenue requirements are paid for by way of monthly user fees and not through connection fees. This model is much like paying taxes: Everyone pays taxes but not everyone consumes all the services for which our tax dollars are used. This approach has been around for many years. This is not the WCSA method.

A different rate structure is one that allocates cost only to those who are con-

suming the services. For example, if you are a current customer, you pay only for the cost to operate, maintain and replace the existing system (non-growth cost). If you are not an existing customer but wish to purchase a new water/sewer connection, then you pay for the cost to expand the system comparable with the volume you plan to use. This approach began in the 1970s and has grown in popularity because it allocates costs to those who are consuming the services, rather than one group subsidizing another, and it provides financial stability. Additionally, it keeps monthly user rates lower. To keep monthly user fees low, to

ensure revenue is available for improvement projects and to accomplish general equity, WCSA's rate structure relies more on this philosophy than on the traditional model. Currently, 5 percent of your monthly water and 25 percent of your sewer bill are related to growth-related costs. There are other methodologies and variations, but WCSA has operated on the philosophy that a blend of the traditional and growth-paying-for-growth approach is best for WCSA.

In the next issue of *In the Pipe*, we will discuss WCSA's operations. 💧

## WCSA Project Updates



*New conventional filter at Middle Fork Water Treatment Plant.*

■ The **Middle Fork Water Treatment Plant Expansion, South Fork Intake and Raw Water Line Project** will expand the water production capacity of the Middle Fork Water Treatment Plant from 6.6 to 12 million gallons per day (MGD). A second new raw water intake, expected



*New water line outside Middle Fork Water Treatment Plant.*

to be complete in April 2014, is being constructed on the South Fork of the Holston River, where raw water will be pumped to the existing water treatment plant via a new raw water line, which was completed in 2011. Improvements at the Middle Fork Water Treatment Plant will be completed in August 2013.



*Finished water piping at Middle Fork Water Treatment Plant.*

■ The **Oak Park Wastewater Expansion Project** features construction of a sewer system to serve 21 new residential, commercial and industrial connections along Lee Highway and six existing industrial connections in the Oak Park Center for Business and Industry. This

project is providing 500,000 gallons-per-day sewer capacity for new or expanding industry. The project was completed and ready for operation in July 2013.

■ The **Mendota Community Water System Improvements Project** will provide a more reliable source of water and improve fire protection for 60 Mendota customers. The project is expected to be complete by August 2013.

■ The **Green Spring Road Water Line Improvements Project** will improve water service for approximately 39 existing connections, including two restaurants and a shopping center. The project is expected to be complete by September 2013.

■ The **Hillendale Road Water Line Extension and Red Fox Lane Water Line Extension** projects will each provide water service to three homes that currently rely on private wells, springs and cisterns, some of which are bacteriologically contaminated or do not provide an adequate quantity of water. The projects are expected to be complete by October 2013. 💧

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

### Randall Baker

*Meter Technician, Meter Department*




Randall Baker enjoys outdoor activities, so his job places him in his favorite environment. As a meter tech, he is responsible for repairing residential and large meters, as well

as testing the latter for accuracy.

Randall grew up in Bristol, Va., where he now resides. He joined WCSA's maintenance department in 1988, after working in manufacturing and grocery positions. He has completed Neptune meter training in Knoxville, Tenn., and Sensus meter training in Texarkana, Texas.

"It doesn't matter the problem –

whether it's the water meter, a leak or something else – Randall always satisfies the customers' questions," says Clyde Belcher, meter manager. "He's had to learn a lot of new things, including how to test and repair all of our large meters, and he does a great job."

In his spare time, Randall likes to fish, hunt with his squirrel dog and go bike riding. 

## Congratulations!

Please join us in congratulating **Don Cole** on his promotion to water production manager, effective April 8. Don has been employed with WCSA for 14 years and holds a Class I Water and Class IV Wastewater License. In March 2008 he was promoted to chief operator and in 2009 was honored with the Edward H. Ruehl Operator of the Year Award by the Virginia Section of the American Water Works Association. Don was selected for this award based on his contributions to operator programs, outstanding service and his knowledge and skills in the water industry. These skills are valuable as Don leads the water production team in providing quality drinking water to the residents of Washington County.

**Joe Baldwin** has been promoted to chief operator of the Middle Fork Water Treatment Plant (WTP). Joe holds a Class I Waterworks License. He joined the maintenance department in April 2001 and was later promoted to equipment operator. He transferred to the Middle Fork WTP in April 2007. Joe's knowledge and skills are a valuable asset to WCSA.


## Use Your Garden Hose Safely!



Did you know that using your garden hose improperly can affect your drinking water? A couple of simple precautions can help prevent potential contamination.

Do not immerse a hose sprayer or faucet directly in a container of water, bucket of fertilizer, swimming pool, etc. Instead, you should securely place the outlet end of the hose above the water surface while filling. Immersion can cause cross connection or backflow, due to changes in water pressure. As a result, contaminated water from your garden hose may flow back into the drinking water system.

WCSA recommends the installation of an inexpensive backflow prevention device called Hose Bibb Vacuum Breaker (HBVB). HBVBs prevent harmful chemicals from flowing backward and contaminating your water supply should you accidentally drop a hose into a container of water.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact us at [inquiry@wcsawater.com](mailto:inquiry@wcsawater.com) or call 276-628-7151. 



# Wise Use of Water



Adjusting the way you use water in and around the home can not only save money on your utility bill – wise use of water helps prevent pollution in lakes, rivers and local watersheds. Here are some recommended tips for better stewardship of this important natural resource:

**1. Use your water meter to check for hidden water leaks.**

Read the water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water has been used. If the meter

does not read exactly the same, there is a leak.


**2. Insulate your water pipes.**

It's easy and inexpensive to insulate water pipes with pre-slit foam pipe insulation. You will get hot water faster, plus avoid wasting water while it heats up.

**3. For new installations, consider buying "low flush" toilets.**

These use one to two gallons per flush instead of the usual three to five gallons.

**4. Rinse your razor in the sink. Fill the sink with a few inches of warm water.**


This will rinse your razor just as well as running water, with far less waste. 

Source: [eartheasy.com](http://eartheasy.com)

## WCSA's Middle Fork Plant Earns State Award



For the third straight year, WCSA's Middle Fork plant achieved the highest possible ranking in operations excellence for water utilities. According to the Virginia Department of Health, the plant was one of 22 conventional water treatment plants out of 130 in

Virginia that received a gold award in 2012. The Middle Fork plant, along with 21 others statewide, earned a performance score of 20 in the judging criteria, with 20 being the highest possible score. Middle Fork also earned gold awards in 2010 and 2011. 

## Customer Testimonials

On arriving home from work on March 6, there was a pond in my front yard, a stream running down the road, and ultimately a creek in my basement. Apparently the connection from the water meter to the house had loosened and water had been pouring out for quite some time. I wanted to let you know how much I appreciated the help of the WCSA staff – Melissa, Chris, Randy

and Travis – during this residential water emergency. Melissa was the emergency after-hours operator, while Chris, Randy and Travis came to troubleshoot and turn off the line. I am very thankful for all their kindness in helping to resolve a stressful situation. This is a perfect example of how people make Washington County, Va., a good place to live. - R.L.



<b>Labor Day</b>	<b>Sept. 2</b>
<b>Columbus Day</b>	<b>Oct. 14</b>
<b>Thanksgiving</b>	<b>Nov. 28-29</b>
<b>Christmas</b>	<b>Dec. 24-25</b>
<b>New Year's</b>	<b>Dec. 31 - Jan. 1</b>



## Board Meetings

The WCSA Board of Commissioners meets at 7 p.m. in the E.W. Potts Board Room at WCSA, 25122 Regal Drive, Abingdon, Va. The public is welcome to attend.

Please call our offices for dates of regular meetings of the WCSA Board of Commissioners for the remainder of this year.

## REMINDER

**AVOID THE TIME AND EXPENSE OF MAILING AND POSTAGE WITH WCSA's AUTO-DRAFT.**

**CALL OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPARTMENT AT 276-628-7151 FOR DETAILS.**

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