

IN THE PIPE



NEWSLETTER

Winter/Spring 2017

No. 17

Tap Vs. Cap: Consider Where You Get Your Water

When you're thirsty, do you head for the tap or open a cap? Thinking about where your daily water intake originates can help you make decisions that impact the environment, influence your budget and affect your personal health.

Over the past 10 to 20 years, there's been a remarkable rise in the popularity of bottled water. While bottled water only represented four percent of the overall beverage market in 2000, sales had risen to approximately 18 percent of the market by 2010, a more than four-fold increase.

Although bottled water is frequently presented as coming from glaciers or springs, some companies simply fill bottles from local public sources, then charge customers for the costs of packaging, marketing and transportation. These costs add up fast. Depending on the materials factored in, the price of bottled water can range from \$1.22 up to \$7.50 per gallon. That's anywhere from 300 to 2,000 times more costly than the same amount of tap water, which can average out to a fraction of a penny per gallon.

"Bottled water has become such a habit and convenience that we generally don't think about the price, but we often pay more for pre-packaged water than we would ever consider paying for the same amount of gasoline," says Robbie Cornett, WCSA's general manager. "It's important to be conscious of how the regular purchase of bottled water can detract from a family budget, strain renewable resources and adversely impact individual health."

While there have been strides in reducing the overall weight of bottles, as well as efforts made to bolster recycling, single-serve plastic water bottles can introduce chemicals, toxins and bacteria that affect normal biological processes in humans. Additionally,



only between 30 and 40 percent of bottles are currently recycled in the U.S., adding tons of plastic waste to landfills and the landscape each year.

WCSA makes it a priority to properly protect, filter and monitor the water we deliver to customers. WCSA water is also routinely evaluated by state and federal agencies, with the results made public through an annual Drinking Water Quality Report.

"Regulations on bottled water testing vary from state to state, while public utilities fall under much closer scrutiny," Cornett says. "We're very proud to say that we meet or exceed all state and federal requirements for water quality, monitoring and reporting. Ultimately, as you move throughout your day, it's much cheaper and healthier — and more resource-friendly — to use a personal canteen and fill it from your home tap."

For more information on WCSA's source waters, or to review the annual Drinking Water Quality Report, visit www.wcsa-water.com.

Sources cited: *Bottled Up: Beverage Container Recycling Stagnates, U.S. Container Recycling Rates & Trends, 2000-2013;* "Bottled Water Costs 2000 Times As Much As Tap Water," by Matthew Bosler for *Business Insider*, 2013.

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WCSA Project Updates



Galvanized Water Line Replacement — Phase 2 Project

Ongoing Projects:

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

The **Galvanized Water Line Replacement — Phase 2 Project** is the second step in a three-phase project to replace all galvanized pipe in WCSA's distribution system over the next several years. Construction on the fifth division of Phase 2 began in June and is expected to be completed by the spring of 2017.



Site of the Exit 13 Phase 2A Sewer Project

The **Exit 13 Phase 2A Sewer Project**, located off I-81 at Exit 13, is the second step in a multi-phase project to extend wastewater treatment service to the Lee Highway area of Exit 13. Phase 2A will consist of installation of a sewer main from

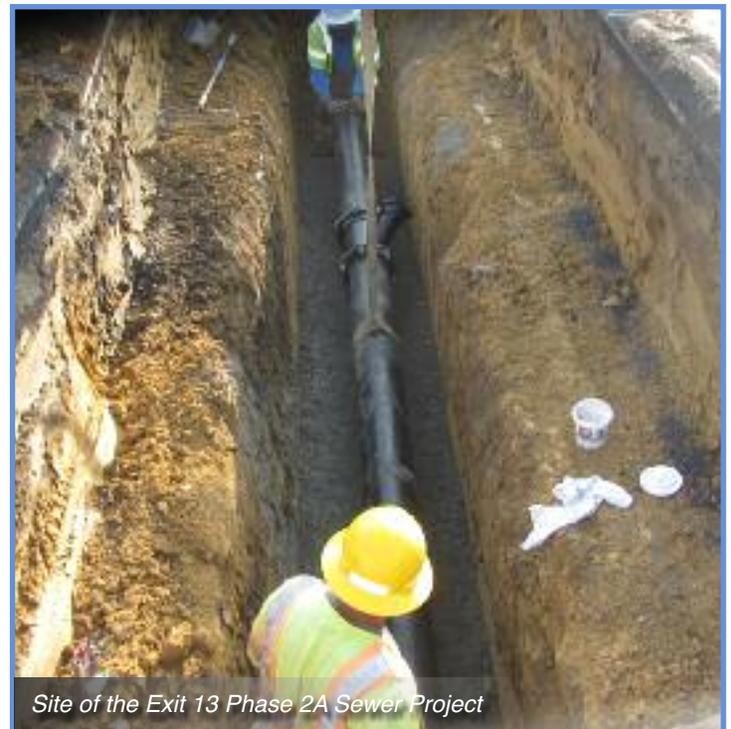
Spring Creek Road to the Virginia Highlands Airport, as well as some branch lines or laterals to provide service for customers who are not directly adjacent to the Oak Park Sewer Project. Construction began in October 2016 and is expected to be completed by late spring 2017.

Upcoming Projects:

The **Route 58 Corridor Water System Improvements Project** will include improvements for the water system serving the Town of Damascus, Alvarado and areas east of South Holston Lake. Installation of a new water storage area tank is expected to begin in early 2017 and be completed by the fall of 2017.

The **Mill Creek Water Treatment Plant Improvements Project** will provide a new membrane filtration system and additional repairs, replacements and upgrades to the water treatment plant. Construction is expected to begin in February 2017 and be completed in early 2018.

The **Haskell Station Road Water Line Extension Project** will replace and install approximately 4,700 linear feet of new water line. The project advertised for bids in late fall of 2016. Construction is expected to begin in early 2017. 💧



Site of the Exit 13 Phase 2A Sewer Project

Responsible Stewardship a Priority for WCSA

In caring for our customers, WCSA attempts to focus on serving as a responsible steward of all resources with which we are entrusted. This includes our customers' water supply, the equipment and structures we oversee, and the fiscal health that allows us to look toward the future with confidence.

As part of this stewardship, we routinely audit our existing infrastructures. We evaluate the upkeep of many physical assets, including the miles of piping, thousands of valves, and multiple pumping stations that deliver clean, safe water to homes and businesses throughout our service area. Here, WCSA employs a geographic information system inventory — and other tools — to develop its capital improvement plan and provide routine check sheets of all major system components. WCSA also performs regular checkups of the financial systems that keep our day-to-day operations running smoothly.



Galvanized Water Line Replacement — Phase 2 Project

“WCSA places a high priority on our financial health,” says Robbie Cornett, WCSA’s general manager. “Each year, we contract with a third party to evaluate our fiscal well-being, relative to generally accepted accounting standards. We might think of this as regular visits to a general physician. Additionally, our board of commissioners will, from time to time, employ special audits to examine specific areas. We might think of this as seeing a specialty physician. Recently, the board had our internal controls and fringe benefits reviewed. Together, these audits help ensure that we are operating with a high degree of accountability and transparency, something that’s essential to the quality of our services and the well-being of our customers.”



Middle Fork Drinking Water Plant

In recent years, Robinson Farmer Cox Associates of Blacksburg, Virginia, has audited WCSA’s general financial practices. In each instance, WCSA received an unqualified opinion, and no material findings were noted. A special audit was conducted in Fiscal Year 2016 by Blackburn, Childers and Steagall of Johnson City, Tennessee. Again, there were no material findings.

“We’re very pleased to know that we’re operating in a manner that is helping to ensure long-term stability in our home community,” says Kenneth Taylor, WCSA board chairman. “Our customers are our neighbors, family and friends, and we want to be sure we’re always in a position to plan for a healthy, sustainable future.” 💧



Mill Creek Drinking Water Plant Membrane Filtration System

Employee News

Congratulations

WCSA congratulates Joey Forster on the successful completion of his Class One Waterworks license. Forster joined the WCSA team in July 2013.



Joey Forster

Did You Know?

Many residents of Washington County love to ride the Virginia Creeper Trail, the 34-mile bike path that follows the bed of the former Norfolk and Western rail line from Whitetop down to Abingdon. The trail's winding course offers a peek into more rural areas of the region, as well as beautiful views of the adjacent Whitetop Laurel Creek.

With feeder waters that rise in the heights of the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Whitetop Laurel Creek parallels several upper sections of the Creeper Trail. It is a beautiful waterway that features still sections as well as falls, and one pristine stretch has received an Exceptional State

Waters designation from the commonwealth of Virginia. The creek supports a range of wildlife, including stocked and wild populations of brook, brown and rainbow trout, which makes it one of the most desirable fly-fishing streams in the Southeastern U.S.

The waters of Whitetop Laurel flow into Laurel Creek and eventually join the South Fork of the Holston River, one of the sources that WCSA draws on as we supply our customers with clean, clear drinking water. So next time you are out hiking or biking the Creeper Trail, take a moment to enjoy the rushing waters of this beautiful resource — because along with your memories of a fun day, it's one element of the trail that will follow you home!



Photo credit: Jason Barnette courtesy of Visit Abingdon Virginia



WCSA Calendar

WCSA offices will be closed on the following holidays:

President's Day Feb. 20
Good Friday April 14



Board Meetings

UPCOMING BOARD MEETING DATES

Feb. 27, 2017

March 27, 2017

April 24, 2017

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.

REMINDER

AVOID THE TIME AND EXPENSE OF MAILING AND POSTAGE WITH WCSA'S AUTO-DRAFT, ONLINE BILLPAY OR 24/7 PAY BY PHONE.

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

WCSA
25122 Regal Drive
Abingdon, VA 24211
P: 276-628-7151
F: 276-628-3594

Email: inquiry@wcsawater.com
www.wcsawater.com