



# ON TAP

**P R O J E C T S P O T L I G H T :**

## **Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant Facility Improvements – Phase 1**

In March 2016, the District began the process of obtaining qualified candidates to conduct an evaluation of current plant operations and processes, assist in securing funding, and to assist in planning future improvements related to the District’s Sonora Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility (SRWWTF). The District hired Stantec Consulting Services to perform the evaluation.

The District provides wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal services to the majority of the population of Tuolumne County. The District owns and operates the Sonora Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility (SRWWTF), which is a conventional secondary wastewater treatment plant permitted for an average dry weather flow rate of 2.6 mgd. The existing facility was originally constructed in 1974.



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**JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2018**

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Treatment related projects are intended to improve the District’s ability to meet its regulatory requirements in the most cost effective and efficient manner possible. With the recent drought and with the State’s mandated water use reduction of 20% by 2020, flows into the plant have been steadily dropping. The 5-Year CIP adopted by the Board of Directors in 2015 will fund approximately \$700,000 of a multi-year and multi-phase project that is expected to cost approximately \$3.9 million.

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*Center cans  
installed at  
the Regional  
Facility*

The District plans to use these funds for a new generator, new motor control center, drainage improvements, recoating the secondary clarifiers, and pavement rehabilitation.

To improve efficiency, the following improvements were recently made to the Regional Facility: new center cans, a gear box, motors, and drives on the trickling filter distributor arms. These improvements at the trickling filters are necessary to effectively remove biological matter in the wastewater coming into the plant. These biological characteristics have changed with the reduction of water use. District staff is seeking funding for a construction grant to fund additional wastewater process improvements.

## Change in Water Rates – 2018

The District recently sent out a postcard to all of its customers to notify them that there will be a rate change to water and sewer billings effective January 2018. The Tuolumne Utilities District (TUD or District) continues to carry out capital improvements in support of upgrading the District's water and sewer infrastructure. In the 2017-18 budget year, TUD will undertake \$2.8 million in water and \$1.2 million in sewer projects to improve reliability and support operations in both systems. In 2015, the District approved a 5-year capital improvement program (CIP) that identifies critical improvement needs. The approved 5-year CIP was accompanied by a 5-year rate plan, with increases to water and sewer rates over that term. To view a listing of current projects and those that have been completed go to the TUD website, <https://tudwater.com/about-us/capital-improvement-plan/>

The District will implement the third year of the rate plan effective January 1, 2018. Billing statements issued after January 1st will reflect water and sewer rate increases according to the approved rate structure. Please visit our website to learn more about the water and sewer projects completed and the new water and sewer rates.



## Is Your Home Ready for the Cold?

In the Sierra foothills the weather is unpredictable, especially in the winter months; however the coldest temperatures typically occur in the months of January and February. And while the average low temperature in Sonora in January is 33 degrees, there have been many years that the temperatures have dropped below freezing which can result in broken pipes or customers without water.



If you have not taken steps to prepare for freezing temperatures we would like to remind you some simple precautionary steps that will help you protect your home and property from cold winter conditions, and prevent pipes from freezing.

### ***Insulate Exposed Pipes, Faucets and Pipes Prone to Freezing:***

Outside pipes and faucets, and pipes in unheated garages and crawl spaces are most vulnerable to freezing weather. To prevent pipes from freezing, wrap them with insulating material. Cover them with plastic and secure with tape, string, or wire. Also, remember to disconnect garden hoses.

### ***Locate Your Main Shut-Off Valve:***

**Don't wait for an emergency.** Find your main water shut-off valve now! If a pipe breaks, you can stop excessive water loss and flooding by turning off your main water shut-off valve. It is commonly located next to the meter, in the garage, or outdoors by the foundation. Test the valves by turning the handle to be sure it is working properly and identify it with a tag. If a main shut-off valve does not exist, it is worth having one installed now by your plumber.

### ***What to do if a Pipe Freezes?***

Never thaw with an open flame. Open the faucet first. Start by warming the pipe as close to the faucet as possible working toward the coldest section of the pipe. Apply heat slowly with a light bulb or a hair dryer set on low. Keep the heat moving in that general area, but never concentrate heat on one spot. If that doesn't work, call a plumber.

**If you suspect a water main is broken, immediately contact TUD's 24-hour Customer Service at (209) 532-5536 so it can be repaired as soon as possible.** Visit the TUD website at <https://tudwater.com> for more tips on how to protect your home in the winter.

## Website Update

In an effort to keep our customers better informed on Tuolumne Utilities District activities, TUD has recently updated its website. The website has a new look which is more accessible whether you are viewing it on your computer, tablet or phone. What interests you most? Board meetings, projects or do you just need to pay your bill? Go online and see the updated website.

<https://tudwater.com/>



## Use Winter Months to Prepare for Spring Gardening

By Rachel Oppedahl, University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener of Tuolumne County



What is an avid gardener to do in the dead of winter, when it's cold, wet, and most plants are asleep? Here are a few ideas for outdoor and indoor activities that will help you plan and prepare for spring.

**Maintain Garden Tools.** Clean, sharpen and repair garden tools before putting them away so they will be ready for use on that first glorious spring day.

**Keep the bugs at bay.** Rather than waiting until mid-spring, when hordes of aphids and other pests cover your beloved plants, one of the simple actions you can take now to prevent or minimize their presence in your garden is to use dormant oil (also called horticultural oil) sprays. Many common pests overwinter on plants and/or in surrounding soil, so these sprays work by smothering the pests that are actually on the plant and the soil surface at the time you spray. They can even kill eggs and larvae. Horticultural oil sprays are relatively nontoxic, and come in heavier, dormant versions for use in winter, and lighter, summer sprays. Always read the labels to ensure you use them wisely.

**Start Composting!** Making your own soil is a magical thing. And there is a composting method for everyone, whether you opt for a small, convenient plastic tumbler just outside your kitchen door or go big-time with a large outdoor system. For a basic primer on composting, visit this University of California web page: <http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8367.pdf>

## General Manager's Corner *By Thomas J. Haglund, [thaglund@tudwater.com](mailto:thaglund@tudwater.com)*

### Dry Fall Pins Snow Production Hopes on January – April Timeframe

A dry fall in the Central Sierra means that we now look to the January through April timeframe for the snow production we need to recharge the South Fork Stanislaus River (SFSR) watershed. We typically like to see snow in sufficient quantity to produce about 15 inches of snow-water equivalent (SWE) by December 31. But, persistent high pressure has produced above average temperatures and below average precipitation through December. As of mid-December the SWE in the SFSR watershed was about 7.1 inches, representing approximately 17% of the April 1st average SWE reading. The Sierra snowpack is officially measured every April 1st which reading serves to measure the type of water year we will experience.

While it is too early to know what the weather has in store as we head into the January to April timeframe, the lack of precipitation at this point is an early reminder that the SFSR watershed that produces our local water supply is a precious resource that merits active management to preserve and protect the water it produces. We must also recognize that an abundant Sierra snowpack is not as reliable as it once was which amplifies the need to judiciously use the water throughout the summer months. We are hopeful that by the time the April 1st statewide snow survey rolls around we will have received an ample supply of snow with a high SWE to get us comfortably through the summer. If not, we will all have to reinvigorate our water conservation efforts. As the old saying goes, "pray for snow."

