



Winter 2011 NewsSPLASH

A publication of Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority



Message from the General Manager

Dean Moss, General Manager

As a non-profit, non-taxing public agency, establishing proper water and sewer rates is key to having the funds needed to maintain the reliable, high quality service our customers have come to expect from us. Our standard operating procedures include aggressively pursuing cost-saving activities and strategies, ensuring that these funds are used wisely. One important cost-effective effort is extending the life of our water and wastewater facilities through regular maintenance and strategic upgrades and replacements or renewals.

BJWSA annually sets aside monies from water and sewer charges paid by our existing customers for system renewal and replacement projects. Reserving funds for these projects today deters future shortages in cash and reduces the need to borrow money. We are determined to avoid the problems experienced by many utilities who did not set funds aside and thus faced the need for millions of dollars of unaffordable repairs resulting in significant rate increases.

We forecast when renewal or replacement projects will be needed and the funds required for them in future years based on a predictive model—developed specifically for BJWSA assets—that evaluates the types, original construction dates, and conditions (based on inspections) of all the parts of our water and wastewater systems. BJWSA's systems are generally in good condition. However some of the water lines in several municipalities, particularly Beaufort, date back to earlier than the 1930s. Aging water lines create constant maintenance challenges and can affect the quality of the water received by the customers. We have been replacing water lines and either replacing or relining sewer lines in communities over the last several years. Many wastewater pump stations have been completely reconditioned. This work will continue into 2011 and beyond.

Renewal/Replacement Projects

Near completion or completed in fiscal year 2010

Project	Cost
Okatie Area Regional Force Main	\$4.68 million
Hwy 802 Asbestos Line Replacement	\$1.15 million
Hwy 17 Force Main and Wastewater Pump Station	\$1.12 million
Chelsea Plant Hypochlorite Conversion and Tower Replacement	\$2.62 million
Duke and Laurens Street Pump Station Rehab	\$500,000
Pump Station Control Replacement	\$200,000

William D. Moss, Jr.
General Manager

Rate Change for New Fiscal Year

In spite of economic challenges, BJWSA has been able to keep rates stable since 2008. However, the financial crisis of the last few years has been a strain on everyone, and BJWSA is no exception. We anticipate a rate increase in the new fiscal year, which begins July 1, 2011.

To ensure that our financial position remains solid and positive, we have deferred construction of new capital projects, focused on rehabilitation and replacement projects, and instituted cost-cutting measures. Providing our customers with high quality services at an affordable rate continues to be our goal.

Changing rates is a very well thought-out process and we have begun work now to determine what the rates will be for Fiscal Year 2012. Inside this issue of *NewsSplash*, you can read more about this step-by-step process. The summer issue of *Splash* will include detailed information about the new rates.

INSIDE: How Rates Are Determined

Railroad Land Improvements Continue

Last year, BJWSA purchased the dormant right-of-way of the Port Royal Railroad, which runs from Yemassee to Port Royal in order to ensure its preservation for our existing pipelines, as well as its availability as future pipelines are needed.



In September, we began removing rail, ballast, ties, and other materials in the right-of-way. These materials will be sold and repurposed for other uses—including other railroads. We have also started improving intersections associated with the railroad. The crossings will be fully repaved and motorists travelling over the new surface should enjoy a smoother ride.

The rail work will continue for about ten more months, depending on weather and other conditions.

What is that pink stuff on my bathroom fixtures?



That “pink stuff” that you may be seeing around your sink drains or in your toilets is naturally occurring airborne bacteria that has nothing to do with the quality of your water. These bacteria seek moist environments to grow.

WHAT YOU CAN DO Always keep bathtubs and sinks wiped down and dry. Frequently clean your sinks with a cleaning solution that contains chlorine. Chlorine bleach (3 to 5 tablespoons) can be periodically stirred into the toilet tank and flushed into the bowl itself. This will not necessarily eliminate the problem, but will help control the bacteria growth. If you have a septic tank, use a non-chemical cleaner, such as borax to avoid damaging your septic system.

IMPORTANT Follow the manufacturer’s cleaning instructions for your plumbing fixtures and countertops; chlorine cannot be used with some designer products. Use care with abrasives to avoid scratching fixtures, which will make them even more susceptible to bacteria.



Doing the Best with Less

Our facilities continue to earn numerous state and national awards, even though BJWSA has reduced operating expenses to below 2008 levels. What does this mean for you? Consistently good service, high quality drinking water, and protection of your local waterways and environment.

- For the fourth consecutive year, BJWSA’s ten wastewater systems have earned the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) Facilities Excellence Award for achieving excellence in all aspects of wastewater operations, meeting or exceeding customer expectations, and environmental protection.
- BJWSA has completed SCDHEC’s annual Sanitary Survey with no deficiencies for the sixth consecutive year. The survey is an evaluation of critical components of the water system, including treatment plants, wells, tank sites, booster pump stations, and distribution system operations.
- BJWSA’s Chelsea and Purrysburg water treatment plants earned EPA’s Phase III Partnership for Safe Drinking Water Director’s Award and the SCDHEC’s Area Wide Optimization Program (AWOP) award for continual production of superior quality water.

BJWSA provides consistently good service, high quality drinking water, and protection of your local waterways and environment.

- All six of our eligible wastewater facilities earned National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) Peak Performance awards for outstanding compliance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits throughout the year.

How are your rates determined?

Determining rates is an annual step-by-step process conducted by BJWSA staff, working with an outside rate consultant and the Board of Directors' Finance Committee. The Finance Committee initially reviews, evaluates, and approves the BJWSA budget and the full Board of Directors gives the final approval.

STEP 1 BJWSA financial staff and Finance Committee (made up of four Board Members) discuss rate and budget objectives.

STEP 2 BJWSA staff and our rate consultant use a computer modeling program to calculate rates, based on preliminary information for the next year. A wide variety of information goes into the model, including the BJWSA financial plan, forecasted water demands and sewer flows, costs to operate and maintain the systems, required cash reserves, equipment purchases, and debt payments to support the Capital Improvement Program.

STEP 3 The Finance Committee reports the budget status and preliminary rates to the Board of Directors.

STEP 4 The staff and rate consultant continue revising forecasts and resulting rates as the budget is developed, keeping the Finance Committee informed.

STEP 5 The Finance Committee recommends the final budget and rates to the Board of Directors.

STEP 6 A notice is published in local newspapers and the Authority holds a public hearing on the proposed budget and rates.

STEP 7 The Board of Directors adopts the budget and rates for the new fiscal year, which begins July 1.

We strive to ensure fair and equitable rates that generate enough funds to reliably operate and maintain the water and wastewater systems.


WHAT COSTS DO RATES COVER?

As a non-profit public utility, BJWSA uses your payments solely to pay for the operation and maintenance of the water and wastewater systems, including the treatment and distribution of water and the treatment and disposal of wastewater; needed equipment purchases; capital improvements to replace or upgrade parts of the system; and debt payments.

WHY DO RATES INCREASE?

Typically, rates increase as the community grows, our infrastructure ages, the price of needed resources (electricity, chemicals, fuel) increase, and regulations change. We must continually upgrade and expand our systems to ensure reliable services. BJWSA examines population trends and growth patterns, along with system operations and facilities requirements, to determine what is needed and what it will cost. In recent years, unexpected changes in the economy and regional climate have impacted operations. Our rate model will include these variables in future projections and rates.

Are You Ready for Freezing Temperatures?



Although our winters are mild, we occasionally experience low temperatures that can freeze outdoor plumbing. When temperatures drop into the 20s, let outdoor faucets—and any faucets next to exterior walls—drip very slightly. This will help to keep your pipes from freezing and bursting.

NewsSPLASH

Winter 2011



Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority

6 Snake Rd. | Okatie, SC 29909
843.987.9200 | www.bjwsa.org

Dean Moss General Manager

BJWSA Board of Directors

Brandy M. Gray Chair
Michael L. Bell Vice Chair
Lorraine W. Bond Secretary/Treasurer
Donna L. Altman
David S. Lott
W.R. "Skeet" Von Harten
James "Pat" O'Neal
John D. Rogers
Dr. William Singleton
Mark C. Snyder
Charlie H. White

PRSR STD
US Postage
PAID
Columbia, SC
Permit No. 535

Need More Information?

Contact our Communications Manager
at 843.987.9213 or visit www.bjwsa.org.

Printed using recycled materials.

Do you want to help people in need in the Lowcountry?

BJWSA's Thad Coleman Fund offers a helping hand to families in Beaufort and Jasper counties who are faced with financial hardship. Named after a beloved past Board member, the fund helps these families pay the costs to connect to the BJWSA water and sewer system. It is funded through various charity and government organizations and—very importantly!—our customers.



HELPING IS EASY! Make a one-time donation by sending a check to Thad Coleman Fund, BJWSA, 6 Snake Road, Okatie, SC 29909 or, **make automatic monthly contributions** by authorizing us to "round up" your bill to the next highest dollar amount (for example, \$26.64 would be rounded up to \$27.00 and the extra 36 cents would be deposited into the fund). Go to our

website at www.bjwsa.org/info/thad-coleman.html and fill out a sign-up form or call Customer Service at 987-9200 to set up your automatic contribution.



CHECK IT OUT!

The TOTALLY NEW www.bjwsa.org.
Worth more than a visit - it's a site to use.