

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND A PROSPEROUS AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR TO ALL!**

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**WHAT'S ON MY TAX BILL?**

There may be three items on your tax bill that are related to the Sanitary District. First, everyone in the District pays a sanitary district tax based on a mill rate. This tax covers debt retirement on the sewer system and lake maintenance costs. The average homeowner will see a slight decrease in this area due in the most part to making an advance payment on our mortgage revenue bond. With declining interest rates on our reserve funds it was determined that making an advance payment on our five percent bonds would give us a better return on our money. The amount of payment was based on maintaining what we would consider sufficient funds for capital improvements or emergency replacement of equipment.

Second, some residents may have a contribution in aid of construction charge if they have connected to the main line installed by the District. These are charges that were deferred on vacant lots until the time of construction.

Third, for those of you that forgot to pay your sewer bill by November 1<sup>st</sup>, there will be a special charge for unpaid sewer balances. This charge will include interest on the unpaid balance plus a service fee. It must be paid with your taxes. It cannot be removed and paid separately. The District Clerk cannot accept payments for your property tax bill.

**THE USER FEE**

There will be no change in the user fee for 2010. The user fee pays for the operations cost of the sewer and these costs generally increase on a yearly basis due to increased utility, fuel, insurance and employee wages. Our employee wage package generally follows the Consumer Price Index. Since there was no increase in that index, there were no increases in employee wages for 2010. To help off-set an increase in our health insurance costs, the covered employees agreed to a change in benefits that included a higher deductible and co-pays.

**SEWER VENTS AND BAD SMELLS**

This time of year we normally receive several calls about sewer smells inside houses. Homes are protected from this odor by the U shaped traps that are present on all the drains and toilets in the house. These traps must be full of water to provide this protection. There are two things that we most frequently find that have caused a trap to lose its water.

- Drying out. With the heat on in the winter an unused drain such as a basement floor drain or utility tub may simply dry out. The solution to this problem is to pour some water in these drains periodically to keep the trap full.

- Plugged sewer roof vents. All homes have vents or stacks on the roof that allow air to enter the system when a toilet is flushed or a drain used. Without these vents working properly the water in the traps may be siphoned out. Cold weather and snow buildup on the roof around vents may cause ice to form and plug the vent. You might look for this problem if you have a sink drain that gurgles when the water goes down. Another indication may be a toilet that doesn't seem to work as well as it did or the water in the bowl is not as high as it used to be. The solution to this problem generally requires a plumber to go up on the roof and thaw the vent.

The term "sewer gas" is generally used in describing the odor people smell if a trap dries out. The actual gas may be made up of a number of different components, some of which may be hazardous. If you suspect a problem in your home, do not hesitate to call a plumber to correct the situation.

## LAKE OPERATIONS

Our aquatic plant removal for last summer was about twice what was removed in 2008. If the season this year follows the past trend we would again anticipate an increase over last year. It would appear over the last twenty years that there are increases for three to four years and then a major decline. To view the graph of plants removed you may go to our web sit and click on Lake Operations and then loads removed. It will be interesting to see if our increased zebra mussel population affects our plant population this season. As in the past we welcome hearing all theories on what influences our plant growth from year to year.

Winter is when we normally do the repairs on our lake equipment. This year most of our equipment is in good condition. We will be replacing a front conveyor on one of the shore barges that is wearing thin with old age. The cutter bars on all of the harvesters will be reconditioned which is an annual tradition after a season of bouncing off rocks on the bottom of the lake.

## NEW EQUIPMENT

We are in the process of ordering two new transports to replace our twelve-year-old ones. Typically they would have been replaced after ten years, but the State grant program was very low on funds for the past two years and very few equipment grants were given. This past year we ranked high enough to receive a 40% grant in the amount of \$85,200. The total cost of the transports is \$213,000. We have sufficient funds in our Equipment Replacement Fund to pay the balance. We add to this fund on an annual basis as part of our lake operations budget. This allows us to purchase without borrowing.

Since the market for this type of used equipment is somewhat limited, we always plan on the new equipment purchase without the sale of the old equipment. We do have someone interested in both units at this time; however, with the present economy it may take some time to sell them if interested party chooses not to purchase them.