

The Drain Report

Shellfish Need Our Protection!

By: Ken Kase with assistance from Jeanne Dorn

Shellfish are commercially harvested in the Poverty Bay area adjacent to the shorelines of Des Moines and Federal Way. The Washington State Department of Health (Health) routinely collects water samples off the shorelines of many shellfish harvesting areas in Puget Sound, including Poverty Bay. Samples are analyzed for fecal coliform bacteria. High levels of these bacteria can indicate water pollution from septic systems or animal waste. Recently Health detected levels of fecal bacterial contamination in exceedance of State water quality regulations at some sampling locations in Poverty Bay's harvesting areas. This contamination limits commercial shellfish harvesting. More work is needed to better pinpoint the source(s) of fecal bacterial contamination.



Geoducks are often commercially harvested by divers.

The fecal coliform bacteria group is a sub-group of total coliform. Fecal coliform bacteria grow mainly in the intestines of warm-blooded animals. The high levels of fecal contamination recently discovered in our area trigger a whole host of activities dictated by Chapter 90.72 RCW - SHELLFISH PROTECTION DISTRICTS, including monitoring of storm water runoff, increased inspection and repairs (if needed) of septic systems, and more targeted educational campaigns so citizens become aware of water pollution and how they can help decrease it.

We can all help solve this problem by being more responsible. If you have neighbors on septic systems, encourage them to have them inspected regularly and tanks pumped as needed. Pick up and properly dispose of all pet waste. Avoid any pollution potential that can drain to a storm drain or creek. These are conduits to the Puget Sound and have a negative effect on the environment.

Shellfish protection districts can affect land use and can cost property owners money in the form of assessments and fees to pay for remedial action to eliminate the contamination. Don't be the source of this contamination! However, a piece of good news is that the State now offers low-interest septic repair loans through the bank Craft3 for anyone who needs assistance fixing a septic system.

I&I Project To Get Started Soon

By: Ken Kase

For years the District has been studying its problem with infiltration and inflow (I&I). We have learned a lot and we have a plan to aggressively eliminate the problem in specific areas. I&I is unwanted water getting into the sewer system. I&I can cause the sewers and the treatment plant to reach or even exceed its ability to collect, convey and treat the sewage. The storms of last winter made it perfectly clear to us that something needs to be done.



Infiltration in a sewer

If we are not successful in reducing the amount of I&I in our system, there are several large and expensive construction projects that would be needed to handle the extra water. It will benefit all our customers if we can significantly reduce I&I. We hope to accomplish our goal by eliminating leaking sewers and illicit connections. The plan is to detect and eliminate these sources of I&I.

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Special points of interest:

- Midway Sewer District has one of the lowest monthly rates in the state.
- The Board meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month. Please contact the office for the meeting time.
- Midway serves the Cities of Des Moines, SeaTac, Kent, Federal Way, Normandy park, Burien, and the Port of Seattle's SeaTac Airport.
- We have been part of this community since 1946.
- You can expect fast personal service when you need it.
- Our employees care about their customers.
- We have a single focus of providing quality sanitary sewer service.

General Sewer Plan Is In The Works

By: Jack Hendrickson



The District has retained the services of BHC Consultants, LLC., to prepare an update of the District's General Sewer Plan (AKA Comprehensive Sewer Plan). They compile a multitude of information concerning the District and the area we serve including characteristics of our area, population projections, regulations and policies, existing facilities, flow characteristics, and operations and maintenance. Included in this process is the creation of a model of the sewer system to identify any bottlenecks or anticipated future capacity or treatment issues. One of the fruits of this effort is a listing of capital improvements needed to continue to provide our customers with the service they expect. Additionally, funding mechanisms to cover the cost of these improvements will be considered. This will include a good hard look at our sewer rates and sewer connection charges. It is too soon to know if a rate increase will be needed, however it is a possibility.



When we think the plan is ready we will submit it to King County, the cities we serve, and certain State agencies, including the Department of Ecology for their review and approval. Once the plan is approved it can be used as a road map for the immediate future of the District. As time goes on things can change and it will again be time to update the General Sewer Plan. It is very important to consider all the changes happening in our area. Advancements such as the extension of light rail service to our area or growth at the SeaTac airport can significantly impact the demands placed on our system.

One thing that won't change is our dedication to provide quality customer service and protect public health with cost effective, reliable, environmentally responsible wastewater collection and treatment.

Another City - Another Franchise Fee By: Ken Kase

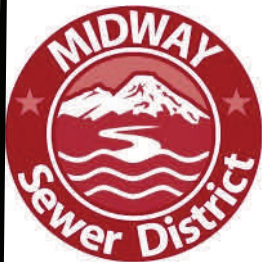
Cities have been searching for new revenue streams in reaction to past voter approved statewide initiatives that limited their income. In my opinion, the possibility of a City charging a utility tax on special purpose sewer or water districts began May 20, 2014. That is the date the Court of Appeals of the State of Washington, Division III, ruled in favor of the City of Wenatchee and against the Chelan County Public Utility District No. 1, in a matter concerning the charging of a utility tax on services provided.

It did not take the City of SeaTac long to react to this decision. At their October 24, 2014 meeting, City staff recommended that the Council pass an ordinance. The ordinance would establish a tax on the gross revenues of certain utilities. To the sewer district it would mean a 6% tax. The Council **did not approve** the ordinance, and to date SeaTac has not imposed any new taxes or fees.

The City of Des Moines was next to react to the Wenatchee decision. October 29, 2015, the Des Moines City Council came very close to passing a 16% utility tax on sewer and water gross revenues. Later a second measure proposed an 11% tax on sewer and water revenues. A lawsuit was threatened and the two sides decided to work on an agreement. After some effort a compromise was attained whereby the water and sewer districts pay a 6% franchise payment (fee) to the City. This avoided a lawsuit. Midway customers in Des Moines saw the Franchise Fee added to their bill in September 2016.

The newest City to approach the water and sewer districts for a new revenue stream in our service area is Kent. They are negotiating franchise agreements with special purpose districts that include a fee on gross revenue instead of a utility tax. The Midway Sewer District will do its best to protect the interests of its Kent customers in this matter.

Board of Commissioners



George Landon Jack Hendrickson Vince Koester Jim Bailey Scot Sanborn

Midway Sewer District

PO Box 3487

3030 South 240th Street

Kent, WA 98089

<http://www.midwaysewer.org/>

206-824-4960