

Press Release –9/6/2024

South Essex Sewerage District
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SESD Launches Updated Website to Protect Public Health and Environmental Awareness Through Wastewater Education

With community involvement essential to effective wastewater management, SESD has enhanced their website to engage the community in supporting their efforts to keep our waters and the environment clean.

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With the public playing a vital role in protecting equipment and maintaining service efficiency, SESD has updated their website to raise awareness about how community members can prevent service disruptions and infrastructure damage caused by improper sewer use. This project is focused on reducing the volume of wipes and other trash currently being flushed down the toilets – causing damage to SESD's aging wastewater treatment facilities – and allowing our systems to operate at maximum capacity.

“Most residents aren’t aware that something like a baby wipe or disinfecting wipe can cause thousands of dollars in damage to our infrastructure and facility,” said Erik Nowak, Superintendent of Maintenance. In addition, that damage can disrupt service which can threaten the surrounding environment. In an effort to keep our waterways free from pollution and prevent expensive repairs, SESD has enhanced our website. By educating member communities about the important role they play in managing costs and keeping our waters and the environment clean, we hope to save money and extend the life of our equipment.

Last year alone, SESD incurred over \$75,000 in labor just to unclog pumps as a result of trash being put down toilets and drains. “It has been over 25 years since our last plant-wide upgrade, making it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to get parts when repairs are needed. This makes it even more critical for us to make sure residents and businesses are clear about what they can and cannot put down drains and toilets.

The website features a new section that answers questions about how residents and businesses can support SESD in their mission to protect Salem Sound. Things like not flushing wipes to prevent sewer backups and redirecting sump pumps to keep rainwater out of the sewers. In addition, a news feed provides updates when issues are occurring at the plant or pump stations. By offering more of this information to the community, SESD hopes to reduce the wear and tear on our equipment that results from improper use and minimize rainwater that enters our pipes.

Located on Salem Neck, the SESD treatment plant removes pollutants from the wastewater before pumping the cleaned water into Salem Sound. Since the last major upgrade in 1998, much of the facility's mechanical equipment and pipes that carry the wastewater are in need of rehabilitation or replacement. Combined with a growing population and environmental changes causing sea level to rise, more intense rainfall and the Commonwealth's goals for greenhouse gas reduction – reliably operating the complex systems is an essential need for the five communities SESD serves to ensure the environment is clean. As a result, SESD is proactively working with municipalities to ensure the facility continues to protect the community from these pollutants by identifying the important upgrades needed and associated costs.

SESD is a regional utility district established in 1925 to provide wastewater treatment and conveyance services to 190,000 people in the communities of Beverly, Danvers, Marblehead, Peabody, and Salem, as well as portions of the Town of Middleton and several State entities. It is our mission to protect public health and the quality of local waterways by ensuring wastewater is properly collected, cleaned, and returned to the environment. For more information, please visit our website at www.sesd.com.