

2018 YEAR IN REVIEW

CEDAR KEY WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

John McPherson, General Manager

As with most water and sewer utilities, no year goes by for the Cedar Key Water and Sewer District without a mix of challenges and improvements. The year 2018 was no exception. The following is a summary of the District's year.

Bridge Pipelines.

A long-term goal of the District is to get all water and sewer lines off of bridges and drilled underground beneath the channels. This is an important goal because pipelines attached to bridges are susceptible to damage due to storms, collision, and deterioration. In cooperation with the Florida Department of Transportation, the District made good progress this year in reaching that goal. In conjunction with the replacement of the two bridges leading to the airport, DOT paid for the water and sewer lines on those bridges to be removed and drilled underground. DOT will also pay for removal and drilling of a water line on Dock Street bridge in conjunction with the planned replacement of that bridge. A final three wastewater lines attached to bridges 1, 2, and 3 on State Road 24 will be removed and drilled during 2019 with partial funding from the Suwannee River Water Management District. The District expresses its appreciation to DOT and SRWMD for their generous support of these projects.

Disinfectant Byproducts.

A long-term challenge faced by the District has been meeting drinking water standards relating to Disinfectant Byproducts (DBPs). DBPs are created when chlorine combines with organics in raw water. The District's raw water comes from relatively shallow wells located several miles out of town on State Road 24. Because these wells draw from a shallow aquifer, the level of organics in the water can vary widely depending on rainfall amounts. The District tests for DBPs every three months, and the results over 2017 exceeded the maximum levels when averaged over that year. This resulted in notices being sent to District customers during 2018.

Elevated levels of DBPs do not pose an immediate health risk, and the water remained safe to drink while the District took steps to bring the levels down. The steps taken by the District involved making several changes and improvements to the water treatment process, with the result being that DBP levels are now well within regulatory limits.

One way to bring DBP levels down to zero and keep them there is to switch from chlorine as the primary disinfectant to chlorine dioxide. Chlorine dioxide is an approved and highly effective disinfectant that does not create DBPs the way chlorine does. Two other utilities in Florida with DBP issues similar to ours have made the switch and brought their DBP levels down to zero. Customers may recall notices that went out in 2017 stating that this switch from chlorine to chlorine dioxide was to be tested during that year, but that testing was suspended while the District sought clarification from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection on some regulatory issues. Since then the District and its engineers have continued to work with DEP and a new test of chlorine dioxide will take place in 2019. Customers will receive notice prior to the commencement of this new test.

Other Drinking Water Quality Testing

Under state and federal rules, the District is required to test the drinking water for a wide variety of possible contaminants. These tests take place periodically and 2018 was a year in which the District was required to conduct many of them. The list of required tests is extensive and includes Nitrate and Nitrite, Primary Inorganics, Secondary Contaminants, Volatile Organics, Radionuclides, Synthetic Organics, and Lead and Copper. The District conducted all of these tests and met all regulatory standards for these possible contaminants.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Permit Renewal

Every 5 years the District's state permit for the wastewater treatment plant must be renewed. The District contracted with Mittauer and Associates Engineers to prepare the permit renewal application and submit it to DEP. The renewal process requires an extensive review of the performance of the treatment plant over the prior 5 years, and must address any problems that the plant had meeting regulatory standards. The permit application was submitted in a timely manner, with no problems with the plant's performance identified. The renewal permit should be issued by DEP early in 2019.

Loyal Employees

Last, but certainly not least, the District is fortunate to have a group of loyal employees that have worked diligently for the District for many years. During 2017 and 2018 the District recognized the following anniversaries: James McCain: 40 years; Ann Richburg: 35 years; Alicia Johns: 10 years; and Billy Quinn: 10 years. The District is also fortunate to have an excellent new employee: Gabe Doty, son of Neil Doty who worked for the District for many years prior to his untimely death.

The District maintains a website at ckwater.org, and may be reached at 352-543-5285.