



# Newsletter

## AUGUST 2023

### Hartstene Pointe Water-Sewer District

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**Billing Office Hours**  
Mondays: 9:00 am—2:00 pm  
Tuesdays: 9:00 am—2:00 pm  
Thursdays: 9:00 am—2:00 pm

Board of Commissioners meetings are held on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month at 1:00 pm in the District Office, 119 E Liberty Rd. All meetings are open to the public.

*Hartstene Pointe Water-Sewer District is not associated with or governed by the Hartstene Pointe Maintenance Association. Please direct water-sewer service related questions to the District.*

*Hartstene Pointe Water-Sewer District is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

## New Slide Gate Actuators Installed



Old Actuator Motors

In March's newsletter, it was announced that the Wastewater Treatment Plant's decades-old *actuators* that open and close the *influent slide gates* would be replaced this year. These *actuator* motors control the flow of raw sewer water into the treatment basins. The older *actuators* were increasingly unreliable, causing the need for operators to manually close slide gates, sometimes multiple times per day.

It may seem a minor inconvenience for operators to manually close slide gates, but when slide gates don't fully close, raw sewer water can flow into basins all night and over weekends.

An important part of treating wastewater involves timing and process controls. One of those controls is a basin's *fill* cycle—when to open slide gates, allowing raw sewer water to flow into the basin, and when to close them, moving on to the next treatment process.

The new *actuators* were installed last month and already, the quality of the treated wastewater has noticeably improved. This capital project should ensure proper slide gate control for decades to come and the District can move forward on other future projects.



Newly Installed Actuator Motors

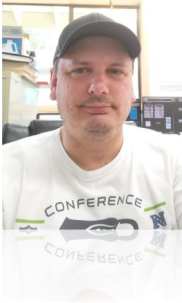
## Ecology's Drought Advisory Continues

WA Department of Ecology recently added twelve counties to its drought advisory and asks that everyone conserve water for the time being to alleviate impacts. Mason County was already in a state of drought advisory and that hasn't changed. Throughout the advisory, Ecology continually monitors water supply conditions and will send out notifications when the advisory is no longer needed.

Ecology notes that the most recent 60 days have featured temperatures in the 90th percentile or above for the entire state and that over the same period, precipitation percentiles were below the 10th percentile for most of Western and Southeastern Washington. Read more from Ecology's drought advisory: <https://apps.wa.ecology.gov/docs/WaterRights/wrwebpdf/2023DroughtAdvisory.pdf> →



## COVID-19 Workshop Follow Up



Last month, I shared that I was invited to participate in a workshop involving wastewater and COVID-19. The workshop was organized by the Water Environment Federation (WEF), who works with the CDC on this wastewater surveillance program. To quote them, “For 2023, our in-person workshops are focused on identifying barriers to utility participation in wastewater surveillance programs and solutions for overcoming those barriers. The output from these workshops

will be a toolkit...with ideas about how to support utilities in wastewater surveillance programs so that these important programs can continue.” They held ten workshops across the country over the last few months. The one I attended had participants from Washington State, Oregon and Alaska.

The goal of this program is to identify disease outbreaks before they grow too large, as voluntary reporting has drastically declined. When we send in our wastewater samples, technicians can see how much of the COVID-19 virus is in them (as well as monkeypox, polio, et al.). By monitoring trend data, it can be determined where an outbreak is going to occur. The hope is that catching it early enough, another pandemic can be averted.

The workshops’ goal was to identify barriers that caused some wastewater systems not to participate. I saw no reason not to participate, but every place is different. Some have multiple sample locations, some collect the sample but then have to have it shipped. It’s easy for us, as we only sample one location, then the sample is picked up by courier. For other places, they are feeling COVID burnout. There were some disinterested due to political leanings. After discussing what barriers exist, we offered ideas on how to overcome barriers, so that more systems will participate, thus giving more data to the CDC.

I understand having a small crew with a large workload, but overall, it takes such a short amount of time. We also don’t pay for supplies or shipping. As I heard, politics at times come into play, but no matter your own feelings, I have to ask: what’s the harm in being part of it? If this really is able to help prevent future disease outbreaks, I’d rather be helpful, not obstinate.

Overall, I will say I’m happy I attended this workshop and will be a part of this program, which will continue for the foreseeable future. If you have any questions about it, I’d be glad to answer them. More information about the program can be found at [nwbe.org](http://nwbe.org)

— Jeff Palmer, General Manager

## District Reaches Settlement with Waste Action Project

Late last year, the Board of Commissioners received correspondence from Smith & Lowney PLLC, representing Waste Action Project (WAP), a non-profit environmental organization sharing the same physical address as Smith & Lowney in Seattle. WAP intended to sue the District for violations of the Federal Clean Water Act. This took commissioners and administrative staff by surprise, as no one from WAP had reached out to the District by phone, email, or in person to address their concerns. If they had, we would have gladly explained our challenges and plans to meet those challenges.

The Intent to Sue presented Permit requirements and pointed out violations, most notably that the District exceeded its daily treated wastewater discharge into Puget Sound. While this is true, WA State Department of Ecology and the wastewater industry as a whole recognize the enormous struggle with exceedances during rainy seasons, when wastewater plants become inundated with rainwater that makes its way into sewer lines, known as *Inflow & Infiltration* (I&I). The exceeded discharge is rainwater (not raw sewage), which is treated alongside sewer water; if the rainwater didn’t errantly flow into sewer lines, it would make its way through storm water anyway. Also, it rains over Puget Sound. While Ecology recognizes this and understands the **enormous** costs and time it will take for utility districts to rehabilitate infrastructure, the letter of the law and WAP unfortunately do not.

Over the past two years, the District has already moved forward with a plan to address the I&I burden, working with Century West Engineering to update the District’s *Sewer Plan* last year and applying for funding through the WA State Department of Ecology. The outlook for receiving that funding is promising, as the District’s application was included in Ecology’s draft list for funding projects. Look out for more information on that project in a future newsletter.

Following discussions between District counsel, Commissioners and WAP, the District settled with WAP, agreeing to pay fees totaling \$21,000, appropriating \$2,000 of that as a donation to University of Washington Foundation toward the Tacoma Urban Waters Project Fund. While there is disappointment that it had to come to this, legal counsel and WAP’s aggressive litigious history advised that the alternative would have financially devastated the District, when funding itself is what is needed to address challenges faced by the District. Commissioners and staff will continue moving forward with improving the infrastructure vital to serving a healthy community.

## Store Water for Emergencies, Outages

As we take heed of Ecology’s drought advisory, remember: emergencies and disasters happen. Unexpected emergencies can force water service to be interrupted. When operators need to shut off water service to a residence or multiple residences, oftentimes the District needs to do so in response to an unexpected leak, meaning the District cannot provide advanced notice to residents. Consider having a backup supply of bottled water, aiming for a month supply of 2 gallons per person per day. A lot more information about being prepared for extended emergencies/disasters can be found on HPMAs website, [hpm.org](http://hpm.org) →→→



### Drippy the Droplet’s Water-Saving Tip:

**“Consider taking your vehicle to a carwash service, which uses less water than washing at home. If washing your vehicle at home, use a bucket**

**instead of leaving the hose running to use less water.”**