



THE IRONHOUSE INSIDER

www.ironhousesanitarydistrict.com

24-hour emergency line: 925-625-2279

Autumn 2013

BRIEFLY

Register for hunting pass

The longtime tradition of pheasant hunting on Jersey Island that was started more than 40 years ago by the family that once owned the island will continue again this year when pheasant hunting season resumes Nov. 9. The season runs through Dec. 22. Those interested in hunting on the island, located between Oakley and Bethel Island and now owned by ISD, must obtain a Jersey Island Public Use Pass either by mail, online or by visiting ISD's administrative offices in Oakley. For more information see the district's website or call 925-625-2279.



Who would think that dirt would be such a hot commodity? The state Department of Water Resources, Reclamation District 830 (which maintains the levee protecting Jersey Island), and ISD have entered into agreements to transport up to 600,000 cubic yards of dirt from approximately 100 acres of ISD property to a habitat restoration project a couple of miles away on the other side of Marsh Creek.

The project will result in a benefit to the district of about \$2.5 million via the sale of the dirt. The total DWR grant is just under \$9 million.

"This project will be a great deal for ISD ratepayers," General Manager Tom Williams said. "We'll be able to use this money to offset future district fees."

The Marsh Creek Delta Habitat Enhancement Project will use the dirt to raise the elevation of part of the Dutch Slough Restoration project (across Marsh Creek) that has been deteriorating over the last 100 years. By raising elevations, additional tidal marshes and upland areas can be created, improving the habitat value of the restoration project.

Why is this important? More than 100 years ago,

Continues on page 5

Ratepayers will see sewer service fees unchanged for 2013-14 fiscal year

ISD customers will see no change to their sewer fees for the first time in many years, after the Board of Directors voted in June to keep the existing rates in place for 2013-14.

The board voted 5-0 to keep the annual sewer service charge

at \$618 per equivalent service unit (ESU) as of July 1, 2013.

ISD customers are charged for their annual service through their Contra Costa County property tax bill.

Over the past six years, the district has slowly raised the

annual sewer service charge to cover its operating expenses as well as construction and loan payments associated with the new Water Recycling Facility.

At the request of the board, the ISD staff worked diligently to provide alternatives to rais-

ing rates when developing the 2013-14 fiscal year budget.

"After careful planning the staff presented a budget that maintains rates without lowering the quality of service the district is known for," said Tom Williams, ISD general manager. □

POLLUTION PREVENTION AT THE CROSSROADS

CELEBRATE POLLUTION PREVENTION WEEK ~ SEPTEMBER 16-22, 2013

PAVING THE WAY TO A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Over the past couple of years ISD has been doing a lot of talking about Pollution Prevention, or P2. The third week of each September is dedicated to a national pollution prevention campaign where public agencies throughout the country work to educate their customers about the P2 message of environmental stewardship.

So what is P2? It is all about reducing or eliminating waste at the source by modifying production processes, promoting the use of non-toxic or less-toxic substances, implementing conservation techniques, and re-using materials rather than putting them into the waste stream.

Since pollution prevention is one of the key initiatives in ISD's public outreach programs, the district put together a website called ISDP2.org. The site features information about several of ISD's P2 campaigns, including the FOG reduction and reuse program, efforts to prevent wipes from being flushed down drains, and proper ways to dispose of unwanted medicines and pharmaceutical products.

ISD will kick off this year's Pollution Prevention Week at the Heart of Oakley Festival, Saturday, Sept. 14, on the grounds of Oakley City Hall.

The District will present ideas for pollution prevention, including reuse and recycling that will benefit both residents and the district and help pave the way to a cleaner environment. ■

ISD HONORED FOR OUTSTANDING PUBLIC OUTREACH

Ironhouse Sanitary District received a special award from the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) for Public Outreach and Education at the association's annual conference in August.

ISD received the award for its "Lighting Your Way to Proper FOG Recycling" program, which launched in late 2011 to encour-



age residents to not pour household fats, oils and grease down the drain, but rather recycle their FOG at the district's drop-off site so that it can be reused as bio-diesel fuel.

The award-winning campaign included advertising on the district's website, signage, social media and media coverage. Bay Area and Sacramento area news stations covered the district's Saturday FOG drop-off days that encouraged residents to bring in their used turkey fryer oil and holiday cooking grease.

Tapping into the reuse angle of turning the FOG into bio-diesel also caught the atten-

tion of "green" bloggers, garnering a "Weekend Warrior" award for providing the service.

CASA is a statewide agency that pulls together sanitary districts from all over the state and provides leadership, advocacy and information to members and the public and promotes partnerships on clean water, beneficial reuse and "resource recovery" issues that protect public health and the environment.

This is the second major CASA award for ISD, which in 2011 was also recognized for technological innovation and achievement for the new Water Recycling Facility. ■

DON'T GROW A 'FATBERG' — RECYCLE YOUR FOG WITH US

You may have heard recently about the large "fatberg" that formed in London sewers. The massive clog was the end result of years of household fats, oils and grease (FOG) poured down residential drains and cemented in place by so-called disposable wipes.

London authorities estimated that the "fatberg" was the size of one of London's famous double-decker buses. Resembling a monster from a Hollywood B movie, the clog was said to weigh 15 tons — 30,000 pounds of crud! Many people have asked if something like that could happen to clog sewer lines in

Oakley and Bethel Island. The answer is an unconditional yes. Although ISD's pipes are nowhere as large as those in London and giant "fatbergs" won't be frothing out of them, ISD still has to constantly battle FOG and ragging issues (wipes) in its pipe and pumping systems. On their own, FOG or wipes are a huge problem; however, when combined, nasty blockages can result that make cleaning the system very difficult and costly.

ISD's FOG recycling program is one solution to stopping a potential big mess. Instead of

pouring household FOG down the drain, residents should save their cooking grease in a recyclable container and bring it to ISD's FOG House. The new collection station at the Oakley offices is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The self-serve drop-off site includes a bin that allows people to leave their grease containers. A recycling company turns the grease into bio-diesel fuel for school buses.

As for wipes, these should never be flushed down the drain. Please throw them in the trash where they belong. ■



AVOID DELAYS AND EXPENSE

Prevent sewer backups

Since the invention of the garbage disposal in 1938, homes have been outfitted with this handy device that can chop up unwanted, smelly foods in a blink of an eye. It is definitely a useful tool in our kitchen cleaning arsenal. However, not everything should go down the drain, even if it can be chopped into tiny pieces.

As ISD has been letting folks know, fats, oils and grease (FOG) can not only clog pipes in your home, but are also one of the leading causes of sewer overflows into city streets. Sewer overflows and backups can cause health hazards, damage home interiors, and threaten the environment.

MANY COMMON FOODS CAUSE CLOGS

Cooking oil isn't the only thing that can cause FOG in pipes. Studies show that many items that are normally put in garbage disposals can also cause clogs. While garbage disposals are mainly used for getting rid of tougher foods like meat, fats,

dairy products and salad dressing residue left on food products can also cause problems.

In the interest of keeping your pipes flowing freely, we've provided a list of 10 things that you should never put down the drain. (See the graphic accompanying this story at right.)

A VERY STICKY SITUATION

Grease sticks to the insides of sewer pipes, both on your property and in the streets. Over time, it can build up and block the entire pipe. While some of the items on the list are not grease related, the products can stick to grease causing it to create a bigger clog.

It is important to note that home garbage disposals do not keep grease out of the plumbing system. Also, simply cleaning the garbage disposal with commercial additives, including dish detergents that claim to dissolve grease and hot water, may actually pass grease down the drain and cause problems farther down the line.

10 THINGS NEVER TO PUT DOWN YOUR DRAIN

Household Fats, Oils and Grease — also known as FOG — are the most common cause of clogged sewer pipes. Here are the leading culprits that should be kept out of your drain:

- Meat fats
- Cooking oil, lard or shortening
- Butter or margarine
- Dairy products
- Salad dressing
- Coffee grounds
- Baking goods
- Egg shells
- Food scraps
- Sauces



In fact, disposal manufacturers recommend cleaning the garbage disposal with clean, cold water only and stress not using them on greasy foods. These units only shred solid material into smaller pieces and do not prevent grease from going down the drain.

Here are more tips to alleviate

pipe blockage and sewer overflows:

- Never pour grease down sink drains or into toilets.
- Scrape grease and food scraps from plates, pots, pans, utensils and grills into a FOG collection can or the trash for disposal.
- Put baskets or strainers in sink drains to catch food scraps and other solids, and empty them into the trash for disposal.

CHEMICAL PRODUCTS ARE A NO-NO

- Other things to never wash down your drain:
 - Grease from cars or lawn mowers
 - Produce stickers
 - Motor oil, transmission fluids, anti-freeze or other toxic chemicals
 - Solvents, paints, turpentine, nail polish, polish remover
 - Flammable or explosive substances
 - Corrosive substances that are either acidic or caustic
 - Prescription and over-the-counter medication. ■

ARE YOU HEADED FOR A WIPE-OUT?

At a recent community festival ISD conducted a simple experiment to draw attention to one of the number-one causes of clogs in sewer pipes: wipes.

The district picked three types of wipes: one marked flushable, another with instructions not to flush, and the third with no disposal information whatsoever. One of each wipe was placed in a container of water to see if any would biodegrade by the end of the day. None did. In fact, three weeks later, none have... we continue to wait.

This was by no means a scientific experiment, just something to draw attention to the fact that wipes should never be flushed down the toilet.

"Festival goers dropped by the booth asking questions, many telling stories of their own experiences flushing wipes," said Tom Williams, ISD general manager.

One woman said she had always flushed wipes and because they made it down the drain, she didn't think there was any problem. However, people don't realize that the wipes stay in one piece and either clog up the pipes in their homes, get caught in pumps throughout the sewer system or clog equipment when they reach ISD's Water Recycling Facility.

"The best course of action is to keep garbage out of your toilet. Please don't flush wipes," Williams said. ■

WETLANDS

Continued from page 1

small manmade levees were placed around shallow tidal lands so farmers could keep the Delta waters out and grow crops. While that sounds harmless, unfortunately the loss of the important tidal areas that filter storm water and protect against storm surges, combined with decades of land subsidence, have resulted in tall levees, and substantially less protective coastal areas.

The project will also create about 90 acres of wetland and tidal marsh habitat at the site where the dirt is to be removed. The project is estimated to take three years to complete, with relocation of most or all dirt happening in 2016.

“This project is a win-win-win situation,” Williams said. “The local environment gets 200-300

acres of additional habitat, ISD gets money to offset rates, the Delta levee districts meet program mandates for habitat enhancement, the community gets additional open space areas to enjoy, flood protection is improved, and the list goes on. It’s a fantastic opportunity that allows our district to do these great things, while bringing in money over the next four years that doesn’t come from the ratepayer.”

Once the new wetlands habitat is built RD-830 will maintain the habitat for five years. During that time, the goal is to develop a self-sustaining natural area that is appealing to native fish species, migrating birds, and other wildlife that frequent the area. In addition, ISD hopes to use the project to encourage educational opportunities related to Delta habitats, species, biology and science. □

Respect the cone — it’s our safety zone



Any motor vehicle codes that must be observed in a freeway construction zone also apply near local utility crews, including ISD field employees working on sewer system issues. When you see ISD workers directing traffic, please respect their work area and observe all signs instructing vehicles to stop or detour when necessary. Also obey any posted speed limits. Stay alert! Expect the unexpected. Turn on headlights so that workers and other drivers can see you and be especially alert at night while driving in work zones. And most important, be patient. ■

District meeting the challenge of keeping methylmercury out of the Delta

As an organization that discharges recycled water into the San Joaquin River and ultimately the Delta, ISD is expected to follow strict state and regional clean water rules.

In the past two years one major concern for the Delta has been elevated methylmercury levels and the risk it poses to fish as well as the people and wildlife that eat the fish.

To address this concern the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board in October 2011 adopted the Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin river basins to control



methylmercury and total mercury pollution in the Delta.

Each municipal wastewater discharger, including ISD, was given a maximum level of methylmercury allowed in its recycled water. ISD’s allocation is 0.03 grams per year. The dis-

trict has so far been successful in keeping its discharge levels well below this threshold.

In the process of planning and building the district’s Water Recycling Facility, ISD took great care to address all existing pollution standards as well as anticipate changes to those standards in the future.

As part of the Water Quality Control Plan, ISD joined forces with other Delta agencies in April 2012 to develop a comprehensive Mercury Control Study Work Plan. And this past May, ISD began participating in the Mercury Exposure Reduction Program (MERP).

Since the opening of the Water Recycling Facility in October 2011, ISD has been monitoring mercury and methylmercury levels in both the plant’s incoming water and treated recycled water that is discharged into the San Joaquin River. The samples have consistently been far below the district’s allowable annual limit, and at times mercury levels have been non-detectable.

Even so, ISD is dedicated to continuing to meet state environmental standards and is working with other local districts to keep the Delta safe from mercury contamination. □

ISD ADMINISTRATION

- Thomas Williams**/General Manager
- Jenny Skrel**/District Engineer
- David Dal Porto**/Ranches & Levees
- Joe Mueller**/Environmental/Process Compliance Manager

- Sue Walde**
District Secretary
- Marc Haefke**
Operations Superintendent
- Dave Smith**
Maintenance Superintendent

ISD Board of Directors

- Chris Lauritzen**/President
- David Huerta**/Vice President
- Michael Painter**/Director
- David Contreras**/Director
- Doug Scheer**/Director

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ISD board meetings
 Public meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m.





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IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Sept. 14:** Come see our Pollution Prevention (P2) booth at the Heart of Oakley Festival.
- **Oct. 1:** ISD Board of Directors meets at 7 p.m. for regularly scheduled meeting.
- **Nov. 5:** ISD Board of Directors meets at 7 p.m. for regularly scheduled meeting.

Check the district website for special dates



Help the environment by recycling this newsletter. Every ton of recycled paper saves 7,000 gallons of water.

At home on the range: Summer intern learns ropes at ISD cattle operation

When Freedom High School set up an agriculture program last year it offered a rare chance to develop an educational experience on Jersey Island for the students.

“There aren’t many opportunities to see a 3,500-acre working ranch in our service area,” said Tom Williams, ISD’s general manager. “Working with Freedom was the perfect opportunity to start an internship on Jersey Island.”

On break between his senior year at Freedom and beginning college in the fall, Bethel Island resident **Ian Jauregui** was accepted to the six-week paid summer internship, working on ISD’s ranch two full days every week.

With both hay and cattle operations in full swing

during the summer Jauregui had a chance to see and do everything from bailing hay to vaccinating cattle. Along with the duties of weaning the calves and herding the cattle on ATVs, he got to learn the mechanics behind using recycled water to irrigate hay fields.

Jauregui said he had a well-rounded experience and would recommend the internship for future Freedom students.

“This opportunity has set a whole new goal for my life,” Jauregui said. “It’s really good hard work and I was learning something new every day.” ■

During ISD’s summer internship, Freedom High School graduate Ian Jauregui got hands-on experience with cattle operations on Jersey Island.

He was recognized for his work at ISD’s August board meeting.

