



# THE IRONHOUSE INSIDER

www.ironhousesanitarydistrict.com

Emergency line: 925-625-2279

Autumn 2015



**T**he importance of water as one of California's most precious resources was brought home this summer when local residents were asked to reduce usage by 28 percent amid a relentless drought. By far, the greatest use of water during the hottest months of the year is through irrigation, whether for watering lawns, trees, gardens, orchards or controlling dust.

While ISD doesn't have the means to pump its recycled water to customers just yet, in late June the district opened a recycled water fill station and encouraged local residents to take up to 300 gallons per visit.

### PILOT PROJECT GROWS

Operating under strict state restrictions for how recycled water can be dispersed, the program started as a pilot project with just eight hoses and opening just three days a week. The district rented a 21,000-gallon tank with the idea that staff could fill the tank as needed throughout the day.

One tank quickly turned into two tanks as the weather

## Your efforts saved millions of gallons of potable water!

### KNOW YOUR FLAGS

ISD's recycled water fill station uses a flag system to alert customers to the day's operating status. Look for flags on ISD's Main Street sign.

- GREEN**  
Station open during regular listed hours, come on in!
- BLUE**  
Open, but no attendant on duty. Come in to office or call 925-625-2279.
- RED**  
Station closed for holiday or due to rain.

grew warmer, and with so many people waiting on line to fill their 300-gallon containers, more hoses and faster pumps were soon needed to

keep the line moving quickly.

By early July it was evident that to keep up with public demand and save money on staff time the district would need to come up with a more efficient way to deliver recycled water to the pumps and more space to store it.

### PIPELINE HELPS EXPAND HOURS

Staff worked out a plan to build a pipeline that would send water directly from ISD's Water Recycling Facility to the fill station. This required building a 2,200-foot pipeline. The process took several weeks to complete, but the result was worth the effort. Adding the pipeline helped the recycled water service evolve from a pilot project to an ongoing benefit for ratepayers.

Opening the pipeline created speedier access and more



Construction vehicles tank up at ISD's commercial recycled water fill station.

### A better solution for dust control

**E**ven the soft currents of a summer Delta breeze can kick up enough dust off a construction site to cause problems for workers and others passing through. That is why construction crews usually have water trucks wet the area down several times a day – an activity often performed with potable water but perfect for ISD's recycled water.

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## ISD helps feed animal victims of Valley Fire

When the Valley Fire devastated Lake County, there were many victims throughout the fire zone that needed help.

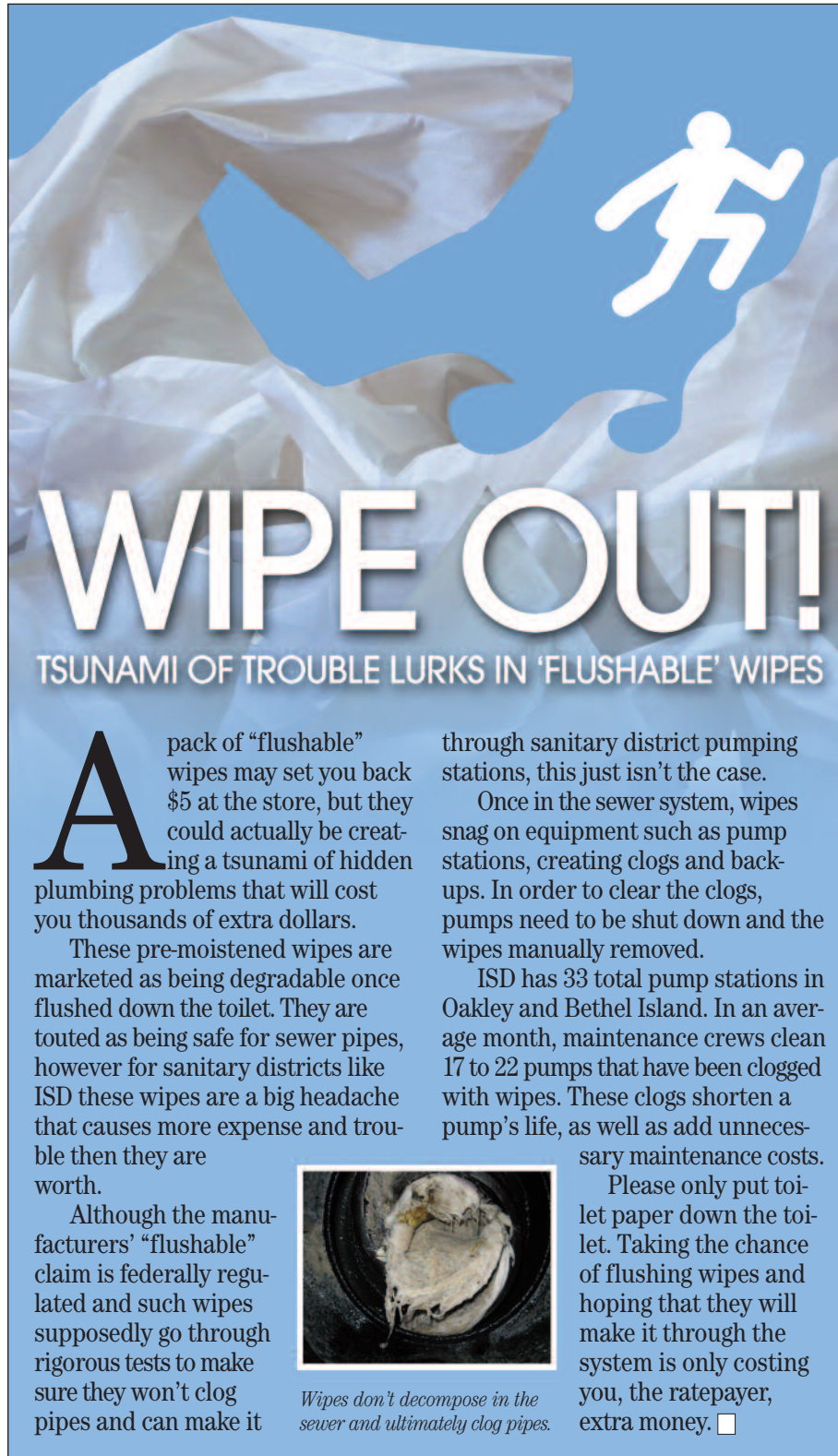
In one of the biggest equestrian and ranching areas in the state, many cattle operations as well as owners of horses, goats and other livestock lost their local feed outlets to flames.

ISD was able to help by sending 148 bales of hay to fire-stricken communities. The hay was disbursed by the local farm bureau to the ranchers in need. □

## ISD needs you as a volunteer

Looking for a unique volunteer experience? ISD is seeking volunteers for such jobs as office assistant, working with cattle, fill station attendant and more.

As a volunteer, you will have the opportunity to contribute your talents and energy to benefit your community and the environment, and at the same time gain personal satisfaction and experience. For details, see ISD's website. □



# WIPE OUT!

## TSUNAMI OF TROUBLE LURKS IN 'FLUSHABLE' WIPES

**A** pack of “flushable” wipes may set you back \$5 at the store, but they could actually be creating a tsunami of hidden plumbing problems that will cost you thousands of extra dollars.

These pre-moistened wipes are marketed as being degradable once flushed down the toilet. They are touted as being safe for sewer pipes, however for sanitary districts like ISD these wipes are a big headache that causes more expense and trouble than they are worth.


Although the manufacturers’ “flushable” claim is federally regulated and such wipes supposedly go through rigorous tests to make sure they won’t clog pipes and can make it

through sanitary district pumping stations, this just isn’t the case.

Once in the sewer system, wipes snag on equipment such as pump stations, creating clogs and backups. In order to clear the clogs, pumps need to be shut down and the wipes manually removed.

ISD has 33 total pump stations in Oakley and Bethel Island. In an average month, maintenance crews clean 17 to 22 pumps that have been clogged with wipes. These clogs shorten a pump’s life, as well as add unnecessary maintenance costs.

Please only put toilet paper down the toilet. Taking the chance of flushing wipes and hoping that they will make it through the system is only costing you, the ratepayer, extra money. □



*Wipes don't decompose in the sewer and ultimately clog pipes.*

## Exploring the future uses of Jersey Island

While cattle and hay operations on Jersey Island have been part of ISD's identity over the past two decades, the opening of the technologically advanced Water Recycling Facility in 2011 has opened more doors for water disposal than ever before. That is why the Board of Directors is in the process of studying the most appropriate uses for this unique island property in the future.

ISD purchased 3,600-acre Jersey Island in the mid-1990s as a means of disposing its reclaimed water on agricultural lands. Currently recycled water is used to grow hay, which is then fed to ISD-owned cattle that are ultimately sold to add supplemental income for the district.

The high-quality recycled water now produced through ISD's cleaning process allows the district's reclaimed water to be used in more beneficial ways, which makes the time right to take a second look at Jersey Island's continued role. More discussions on this topic will take place at upcoming board meetings. □

## Housing construction up, bringing opportunities to connect to sewer system

With development picking up in Oakley and Bethel Island, ISD is able to take advantage of the growth and work with developers to extend the pipeline infrastructure.

In Oakley, development on

the former Gilbert property near Emerson Ranch is beginning. The building of these homes will require a new pumping station in the area. Those who live south of East Cypress Road near the project and currently use a sep-

tic system may soon be able to connect with the public sewer. These homeowners would have to pay for pipe installation and connection costs, however.

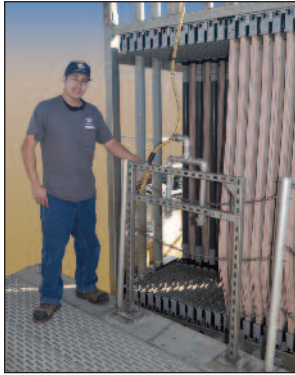
On Bethel Island, work is resuming at Delta Coves.

Developers have agreed to install a new generator for ISD's main pump station, upgrade a pump station on Gateway Road, and line a storage pond where the island's untreated effluent can be routed during emergencies. □

# BACWWE graduate puts skills to use at ISD recycling facility

After earning his bachelor's degree in geography from San Francisco State University in 2012, ISD's **Rick Vargas** was ready to add a new path to his education. He enrolled in a special program designed to train the next generation of water and wastewater professionals.

The Bay Area Consortium for Water and Wastewater Education, or BACWWE program, set Vargas on a course that led to his



ISD's Rick Vargas is responsible for maintaining the membrane bioreactors that are used in the water filtration process.

new position as Lead Treatment Plant Operator for ISD.

## STAFF PROFILE

After completing the BACWWE program, Vargas worked under a paid internship at Ironhouse, but later moved to work for another district until a full-time job became available at ISD last March.

"I grew up in San Ramon and now live in Livermore. I love fishing and boating on the Delta and wanted to stay close to the area," Vargas said. "Coming back to ISD has given me a great opportunity and allows me to

stay in an area I love."

Today as a Grade III Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator, Vargas works on many jobs throughout the facility. One of the most important is keeping the Water Recycling Facility's membrane bioreactors well maintained and fully operational.

The membranes are a key component of the filtration process which helps the district produce the highest quality recycled water in the county. □



## An amazing time in history

I am very fortunate to have had a lengthy career in water and wastewater and I have seen many changes to our industry. I can say, without a doubt, that we are in an unprecedented era.

Because of the drought, we as a society have taken a huge leap forward in understanding the value of recycled water. Until recently, the focus of the sanitation industry has been safely collecting sewage, cleaning the sewage so that it didn't damage the environment and disposing of it.

We now see the benefit of recycled water as a resource. I am thrilled to see truck after truck using our district's filling stations to keep their lawns and gardens thriving.

What really stands out is the pride our neighbors have, knowing that they are conserving millions of gallons of drinking water. We're experiencing a permanent shift in perspective that will last far beyond the "drought."

On behalf of ISD, I am proud to have the opportunity to give recycled water back to our residents and expand its use. □

## How to prepare for El Niño

Weather forecasters are predicting a "monster El Niño" with a very wet winter in store for California, and while there isn't much residents can do to prepare their sewer system for heavy rains, there are a few other helpful things you can do.

- Keep street flooding down by keeping storm drains clear of leaves and debris.
- Keep ISD's 24/7 emergency number handy in case you observe anything out of the ordinary. It's 925-625-2279.
- Don't let storm water drain into your sanitary sewer laterals. □

## RECYCLED

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reliable supplies for fill station customers and allowed the district to expand hours of operation to six days a week by late August. Not only did this save time for ISD staff, but the larger capacity pump cut minutes off how long customers needed to fill their tanks.

From late June to the end of September, the fill station gave away over 3 millions gallons to mostly Oakley residents.

Even though the weather has turned cooler, users have

asked for the service to continue this fall and winter. The good news is that it will, however there will be days of closure due to rain. In the event of major rainfall, the station will be closed the following day, as well. It will also be closed on holidays. (For more information, see the flag graphic on page 1.)

Users are welcome to call the office to make sure the station is open or check out ISD's Facebook or Twitter sites for service updates. □



## DUST

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This summer, Caltrans required all of its construction crews to use recycled water for dust control wherever possible. This opened the door for ISD to offer services to the Highway 4 widening project as well as road projects in Rio Vista and Vasco Road south

of Brentwood.

More than 5 million gallons of ISD's recycled water has been used for such projects. It is a service the district can offer even after the drought is over because there is no need to waste precious drinking water when clean recycled water is easily accessible year round. □



## THE BOARD

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

### ISD board meetings

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

## IRONHOUSE SANITARY DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

- Chad Davisson**/General Manager
- Sue Walde**/District Secretary
- Jenny Skrel**/District Engineer
- Dave Smith**/Maintenance Superintendent
- Chris Christean**/Plant Manager
- David Dal Porto**/Ranches & Levees

450 Walnut Meadows Drive, Oakley, California 94561

Phone: 925-625-2279 • Fax: 925-625-0169  
e-mail: ironhousesd@isd.us.com

[www.ironhousesanitarydistrict.com](http://www.ironhousesanitarydistrict.com)



District Transparency Certificate of Excellence Recipient SDLF



Ironhouse Sanitary District  
450 Walnut Meadows Drive  
Oakley, CA 94561

Emergency 24/7 contact  
number: 925-625-2279

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**IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS**

- **Nov. 26-27:** Thanksgiving. Offices closed.
- **Dec. 1:** ISD Board of Directors meets at 7 p.m. for regularly scheduled meeting.
- **Dec. 25:** District holiday. Offices closed.
- **Jan. 1:** District holiday. Offices closed.
- **Jan. 5:** ISD Board of Directors meets at 7 p.m. for regularly scheduled meeting.

Check the district website for special dates



*This newsletter is printed using recycled paper. Every ton of recycled paper saves 7,000 gallons of water.*

**Get your Jersey Island pass before you hunt**

Purchasing your Recreational Use Pass for ISD-owned Jersey Island has never been easier. Now you can purchase passes on the district's website through Paypal.

There is no additional charge for the service. Recreational Use Passes are good for pheasant hunting, fishing or hiking on the island. Passes purchased now will be good until the end of December and will include the use of the island for the pheasant hunting season, which continues through Dec. 27.

Hunters and fishermen purchasing a Jersey Island pass must also possess the appropriate state licenses and follow Fish and Game catch limit rules.

For more information, see ISD's website at [www.ironhousesanitarydistrict.com](http://www.ironhousesanitarydistrict.com). □



**FATS, OILS & GREASE (FOG) RECYCLING DAY**

**SATURDAY, DEC. 5  
9 A.M. - 12 P.M.**

**& MERCURY CFL BULB EVENT**

**How many people does it take to change this CFL lightbulb? Just you!**

CFL (or compact fluorescent) lightbulbs contain mercury vapors that can harm the environment. They require special disposal. Bring your CFL bulbs when you come to ISD's FOG recycling day and you'll receive a discount coupon for Oakley ACE Hardware so you can replace them with new, energy-efficient LED bulbs.

**DROP-OFF LOCATED AT THE FOG HOUSE, BEHIND OUR OFFICE AT 450 WALNUT MEADOWS DRIVE, OAKLEY**

**Rain or shine**

