An Innovative Approach to Controlling Fats, Oils and Grease

by Courtney Kaufman

Pima County Industrial Wastewater Control (IWC) has launched a new grease management program called the Pima County Preferred Pumper Program (PPP). This program is a partnership between grease pumping companies and IWC to create a standard of cleaning and reporting procedures for grease interceptors.

There are approximately 4,000 restaurants in Pima County and only two restaurant inspectors enforcing compliance with our Grease Management Program. A critical component to reducing Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) is proper operation and maintenance of restaurant grease interceptors. Restaurants are required to keep interceptor-pumping records demonstrating compliance. Unfortunately, records requests were often unfulfilled for various reasons, resulting in restaurants being out of compliance and an ever-growing administrative burden for IWC.

Instead of requesting these pumping/maintenance records from the 4,000 restaurants, the PPP establishes a relationship with the grease-pumping companies directly. These companies have the required documents on file, and if IWC had a stronger working relationship with them, maybe IWC could bring non-compliant restaurants back into compliance.

In February of 2020, a pilot program was launched to test the program on a small scale to determine its level of success. The pilot pumping company began by sending IWC a monthly spreadsheet listing the restaurants they had pumped. With this information, IWC was able to verify that restaurants previously not in compliance were getting their interceptors maintained properly. Those restaurants were then brought out of noncompliance status. Another benefit was that IWC could see where potential problem areas might occur, based on pumping frequency and notes on

Continuous performance evaluations assure proper maintenance.

See “PROGRAM” Page 6
It is hard to believe that it’s already September! But here we are…and there is a lot going on! Earlier this summer, we thought the worst of the pandemic was over. After all, the CDC finally gave vaccinated adults the green light to ditch our masks. Then, the Delta variant emerged.

The Delta variant is one of many variants related to Covid-19. It’s highly transmissible and much more likely to give people Covid. Because vaccines have been saving lives for hundreds of years, I encourage all of you to get immunized. I understand that one reason people are hesitant about getting the vaccine is concern over potential side effects which range from a sore arm to a headache, fatigue and sometimes fever. Medical experts, however, say any side effects are generally brief, last no more than a few days, and serious side effects are extremely rare. Full immunization helps prevent people from getting sick, and on August 23, the Food and Drug Administration gave full approval to the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine, upgrading its approval from an emergency-use authorization.

Pima County has scheduled COVID-19 pop-up clinics throughout the County at various locations, no appointment needed. In-home vaccinations can also be requested. Visit www.pima.gov/covid19vaccine for the full schedule.

If you need a little more convincing, Pima County is providing incentives! At its August 16 meeting, the Pima County Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 to pay Pima County employees $300 and give them three extra days off as encouragement to be vaccinated against Covid-19. Employees who have already been vaccinated will also receive this incentive.

The Board of Supervisors also considered adopting a program of financial disincentives that would have increased health insurance costs for unvaccinated employees by $1,573 per year, but decided to revisit the proposed disincentives at their September 7 meeting.

On another note, I am looking into the feasibility of allowing staff to work an alternate schedule with every other Friday off (working nine hour days with every other Friday off). This is still under consideration and I am working on the logistics.

Finally, Labor Day is Monday, September 6 this year. Labor Day pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers. Created by the labor movement in the late 19th century, it became a federal holiday in 1894. I honor the contributions that RWRD employees make to ensure an important and highly operable utility is provided to the community 24 hours per day, 365 days a year! Thank you all, and have a safe, happy and socially-distanced holiday!

Please note: As part of RWRD’s commitment to sustainability, starting in October, we will be experimenting with disseminating The Pipeline electronically over the next few months and will not print hard copies during this time.
RWRD 2021 Annual Safety Training

Annual Safety Training (AST) is fast approaching. Your Safety Training Committee met in July to assemble your training curriculum for the year. Your mandatory training is based on past and common injury mechanisms as well as OSHA compliance. It was decided early on that this year would be similar to last year, due to the possibility of COVID restrictions for instructor-led courses. Therefore, AST is web-based in the LMS this year. The four hour curriculum qualifies for four Personal Development Hours for those who need them. Sessions, instructors, and durations are shown in the table.

The sessions also have short assessments. Annual Safety Training will be available to all RWRD employees from October 1 through December 31. You will see email blasts from Administrative Specialist Stephanie Reyes as we approach the dates, and periodically while the curriculum is available in LMS. We hope that your sessions will be informative as well as entertaining. Our goal is always to have zero recordable injuries! Safety Always!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Duration (in minutes)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction (featuring a video message from Director Jackson Jenkins)</td>
<td>Ken Coultas, Karen Dillingham</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Hazard Awareness &amp; JHAs</td>
<td>Anthony Merriett</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Emergency Preparedness — ICS/NIMS, COOP, FEAP</td>
<td>Rita Mercer, Jenette Lee</td>
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<td>HazCom &amp; Medical Records</td>
<td>Anthony Merriett</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Electrical Safety Awareness</td>
<td>Mark Villegas, Kino Davis</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Materials Handling &amp; Sprains/Strains</td>
<td>Mike Bergen</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CPR &amp; First Aid Awareness</td>
<td>Kino Davis</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Walking/Working Surfaces &amp; Ladders</td>
<td>Mike Bergen</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2021 National Preparedness Month

The Department of Homeland Security recognizes each September as National Preparedness Month (NPM) to raise awareness about the importance of preparing for disasters and emergencies that could happen at any time. The 2021 theme is “Prepare to Protect. Preparing for disasters is protecting everyone you love.” Each week in September, the campaign will focus on a different aspect of preparedness for individuals, families and communities.

Week 1: Make A Plan
Talk to your friends and family about how you will communicate before, during, and after a disaster. Make sure to update your plan based on the Centers for Disease Control recommendations due to the coronavirus.

Week 2: Build A Kit
Gather supplies that will last for several days after a disaster for everyone living in your home. Don’t forget to consider the unique needs each person or pet may have in case you have to evacuate quickly. Update your kits and supplies based on recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control.

Week 3: Prepare for Disasters
Limit the impacts that disasters have on you and your family. Know the risk of disasters in your area and check your insurance coverage. Learn how to make your home stronger in the face of storms and other common hazards and act fast if you receive a local warning or alert.

Week 4: Teach Youth About Preparedness
Talk to your kids about preparing for emergencies and what to do in case you are separated. Reassure them by providing information about how they can get involved.

For more information, visit the RWRD Emergency Response and Planning SharePoint webpage.
Barbara Escobar leaves RWRD for PDEQ

by Lilian von Rago

After 16 years with RWRD, Barbara Escobar, Program Manager for the Compliance and Regulatory Affairs Office, has accepted a position with the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ), where she will work with PDEQ Director Ursula Nelson in a Deputy Director capacity.

Ms. Escobar has extensive experience supervising and managing large programs. While at RWRD, she managed a budget of over $4 million; and supervised a staff of more than 60 people within the Compliance & Regulatory Affairs Office, Laboratory, the Industrial Wastewater Control Unit, and the Data Management Unit. One of her primary responsibilities was to ensure that RWRD adhered to EPA/ADQ regulations, specifically the NPDES/Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, Biosolids (disposal), Effluent Reuse, and RCRA solid waste requirements. She also has extensive inspector oversight experience, and has managed and worked on regulatory affairs issues, both of which are skills that will be great assets to PDEQ.

Escobar said, “Because I’m staying within Pima County, it didn’t really feel like I was leaving a great organization, but rather fortifying opportunities to collaborate with other departments. I’ve been very fortunate in my career, having great jobs which I really enjoyed, working with awesome people, and having been given amazing opportunities that put me on a path to be able to apply for positions such as the Deputy Director for PDEQ. Further, I find the opportunity to challenge myself with different environmental aspects and regulations very appealing.”

Hot topics that she would love to work on are contaminants of emerging concern (such as PFAS contamination) as well as environmental justice areas.

Ms. Nelson said, “We are very pleased that Barbara Escobar has joined the PDEQ team in the position of Deputy Director. This position was recently left vacant when Richard Grimaldi retired after many years with the Department. Barbara has extensive experience with Pima County and brings with her a wealth of regulatory, management and budget knowledge. In addition, this will foster further cooperation between County departments.”

Federal Support for Infrastructure

On August 10, the United States Senate approved a $1.2 trillion dollar infrastructure proposal which represents the largest upgrade to the country’s crumbling infrastructure in a very long time.

In fact, this bill would denote the most significant investment in infrastructure since Congress ushered in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) in response to the Great Recession. RWRD received significant funds and low-cost loans from the ARRA to enact the Regional Optimization Master Plan (ROMP) completed in 2013. At the time, ROMP was the largest and most complex public works program ever undertaken in the history of Pima County.

This infrastructure package contains funding for water and wastewater projects. In addition, there’s funding for roads, bridges, pipes, ports, broadband, electric car charging stations, zero-emission school buses, and much more. The bulk of the funding comes from repurposing unspent coronavirus relief money and tightening enforcement on reporting gains from cryptocurrency investments.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the bill would add approximately $256 billion to the National Debt.

The legislation incorporates the Senate Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act (S. 914) passed by the Senate on April 29, 2021. S. 914 addresses:

See “SUPPORT” Page 5
The Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Advisory Committee (RWRAC) held its most recent monthly meeting virtually on August 26, 2021. This was the committee’s first meeting since June.

RWRD Director Jackson Jenkins opened with his report, focusing on how the Delta variant has affected the county’s COVID-19 policies. He reviewed vaccination incentives that are being provided to county employees, including a $300 paycheck bonus and three additional days off. He also discussed the Pillar Talks that he held in August, which he was able to do in person for the first time in almost two years.

Director Jenkins also asked if the other members of the Committee had an opinion on when it would be advisable to return to in-person meetings. He suggested using a “hybrid” approach, holding in-person meetings while providing the option to attend virtually. The Committee discussed the proposal, and the conclusion was to continue holding virtual meetings for the time being.

Deputy Director for Treatment Operations Dr. Jeff Prevatt provided a special presentation on recent research and innovation at the Treatment division. He explained the organizational structure of the division and reviewed some recent projects, such as installation of a new Archimedes screw at the Tres Rios Water Reclamation Facility (WRF).

Dr. Prevatt discussed how the Nutrient Recovery System has helped RWRD harvest phosphorus and prevent struvite buildup in pipes, which remains an ongoing problem at Tres Rios. He also talked about how Operations is making its processes more efficient through the Energy Master Plan and other endeavors. Finally, he reviewed how the monsoon has affected the various WRFs.

There were no updates from the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Subcommittee. Financial Subcommittee Chair Matt Matthewson said that the subcommittee had not met nor taken any actions since its last meeting on June 17. Alison Jones of the Citizen Water Advisory Committee said that her committee has not met recently.

Finance and Risk Management Administration Support Services Manager Mandy Armenta provided an expense and revenue summary for Period 14 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020/21. She said the projected budget was $82,551,844, which was very close to the final number for expenses and revenues, which came out to $80,795,833. Next, she reviewed Period 1 of the FY 2021-22. The projected budget is $86,534,993, while expenses and revenues so far have come out to $4,509,523.

Finally, RWRAC voted to have the committee’s current officers maintain their roles for another year, and the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for September 23. It will once again be held virtually. To view the agendas, minutes, and videos of previous meetings, visit the RWRAC page on www.pima.gov/wastewaterreclamation.

“SUPPORT” FROM PAGE 4

• Lead in Drinking Water
• Resiliency and Sustainability Grants
• Sanitary Sewer Overflows and Stormwater Reuse
• Research into Water Infrastructure Technologies and Community Needs
• A low income Water Assistance Pilot Program
• Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Contamination
  The Biden proposal received significant support from both houses of Congress, but there are still a few steps to go before the package becomes law. Although it passed in the Senate, it must now also pass the House of Representatives, where tweaks are expected. Then the House and Senate will meet in a conference committee to hash out their differences before sending a final bill to President Biden.

Arizona Senator Kyrsten Sinema was a key negotiator in the passage of this bill, which is over 2,000 pages long. Congress has a lot of reading to do, and a lot of decisions to make, but ultimately, this package will create jobs and a more sustainable economy.
“PROGRAM” FROM PAGE 1

Interceptor condition provided by the pumper. This knowledge transformed the compliance inspection process from one of reactive solutions based on conveyance reports, to proactive solutions that would potentially stop SSOs before they occur. The pilot PPP revealed many benefits to all parties involved:

**Benefits for the Restaurants:**
- Restaurant will be in compliance with ordinance record-keeping criteria
- Helps prevent discharges of fats, oils, and grease that might clog the sewer
- Good maintenance protects their investment into their grease interceptor and extends the life of the unit
- With continuous performance evaluations

**Benefits for the Members of the PPP:**
- Members will be listed on an easily accessed Preferred Pumpers List
- The Preferred Pumpers List will be on the IWC website and IWC inspectors will also provide restaurants with handouts of the Preferred Pumpers List during their routine inspections
- Because of the open line of communication between the pumpers and IWC, business assistance for the preferred pumpers will be stream-lined
- Possible increase in positive reviews from food service establishments due to fewer grease related issues in their plumbing and an increase in the longevity of the interceptors

**Benefits for IWC:**
- Restaurants returning to compliant status
- Potentially less SSOs
- More beneficial compliance inspections

Because of the successful results of the pilot program, IWC has launched the official Pima County Preferred Pumper Program. Grease pumping companies can now apply to be a member of the PPP. After their evaluation period to confirm adherence to ordinance standards, these pumpers will be added to the Pima County Preferred Pumper List. For more information on the program, and to see the current list of preferred pumpers, you can visit www.pima.gov/preferredpumper.

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**SAFETY SHARE**

Head Up, Phone Down!
- Never walk while texting or talking on the phone
- If texting, move out of the way of others. Stop on the sidewalk
- Never cross the street while using an electronic device

Do you have a Safety Share to share? Email pipeline@pima.gov

**COMINGS AND GOINGS**

by Patsy Padilla

Samuel Portillo
Utility Maintenance Worker I
Conveyance Division

**PROMOTIONS – Congratulations!**

Patrick Alvarez
Utility Maintenance Worker II
Conveyance Division

Christopher Hopkins
WW Heavy Duty Maintenance Mechanic
Treatment Division

Lea Liburdi
WW Laboratory Chemist
Technical Services & Engineering Division

Armando Lopez
Trades Maintenance Specialist
Treatment Division

Juan Raygoza
Utility Maintenance Worker II
Conveyance Division

**TRANSFERS**

Robert Linder
Supply Technician, Senior
Treatment Division

**NEW HIRES – Welcome!**

David Balich
Trades Maintenance Technician
Treatment Division

Kaitlin Beattie
WW Laboratory Technician
Technical Services & Engineering Division

Daniel Lansdown
Engineering Assistant
Treatment Division

Marco Munguia
Utility Maintenance Worker I
Conveyance Division

Deanna Nelson
Buyer
Treatment Division

Nicole Raygoza
WW Laboratory Technician
Technical Services & Engineering Division

Alfredo Valenzuela
Utility Maintenance Worker I
Conveyance Division

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY to all those celebrating in SEPTEMBER**

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WW Laboratory Technician
Technical Services & Engineering Division

Alfredo Valenzuela
Utility Maintenance Worker I
Conveyance Division

**RETIREMENTS – Good-bye!**

James DuBois
Permit & Regulatory Compliance Officer
Technical Services & Engineering Division

Bob Machen
Public Works Manager
Technical Services & Engineering Division

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**HAPPY BIRTHDAY to all those celebrating in SEPTEMBER**

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