

Acton Water District

WINTER 2011-2012

Water Words Notice

The year 2012 marks a century of operation for us, and we are celebrating our centennial this year and have some festivities planned throughout the coming months. On a more global scale, climate shift and severe weather has hit closer to home. And, more can be expected as we move into a new and unpredictable future.

The availability of water at the tap is often taken for granted, as buried utilities are relegated to an “out of sight, out of mind” philosophy. Here in Acton, we have committed to undertaking a perennial replacement program for priority portions of our system with minimal interruptions in service and impact to our neighborhoods. This, of course, is contingent on availability of funding. We have 125 miles of water main pipes of various age and material throughout the town; coincidentally, some of which have been installed for 100 years!

With news of tornados in Central and Western Massachusetts, two hurricanes that made it to the northeast this past year, one of which drastically impacted electrical service; a severe snow storm on Halloween that caused widespread power outages throughout our service area and through all of this, water continued to flow. Even with widespread power outages for long durations, there were no interruptions in the treatment and delivery of water. Our system is designed with back up power supplies; hence, even with electric power remaining unavailable for long stretches of time in August and October/November, water was always available to our customers. We are told, by the experts, these are not anomalies, but a developing trend in severe weather that we can expect to be the “norm.”

I would like to thank the staff of the Water District for their dedication and commitment to public service, I have the utmost respect and admiration for the largely thankless job they do. I would also like to welcome Bill Guthlein to our Finance Committee. Bill brings a lengthy financial background, and will be a welcome addition to an already experienced and professional group. I wish John Cipar fair winds and following seas in his next endeavor, as he moves on to new horizons, and thank him for his volunteer service on the Water Land Management Advisory Committee. I would like to thank our volunteer and elected officials for their support and service to the community. I hope to see everyone at our open house in celebration of 100 years of the Water Supply District of Acton on May 5th. Check our website at www.actonwater.com for activities and offerings observing the centennial celebration.

Respectfully submitted,



Chris Allen
District Manager

Important Notice

As we go to press, we were notified that the South Acton Water Treatment plant project was rated the #1 priority on the State Revolving Fund (SRF) list. We will be posting a special meeting just prior to our Annual Meeting on March 21st for the District to vote on an article accepting this award. The SRF program provides loans with a subsidized 2% interest rate for the construction of water infrastructure throughout Massachusetts. **Included inside your newsletter is the Acton Water District Annual Report and Warrant Articles for the March 21, 2012 Annual Meeting.** Please join us at the Acton Public Safety Facility, 371 Main Street, at 7:30 PM to vote on Water District business for the coming year.

Adopt a Hydrant

The Acton Water District and the Acton Fire Department ask that all residents consider “adopting” a fire hydrant this upcoming winter. If there is a fire hydrant close to your home please consider taking a few minutes to clear away any snow from it so that it is easily accessible in case of a fire emergency. Clearing a path to the hydrant and a three foot radius around the hydrant insures full access during a fire. This could save precious minutes in critical fire situations; your family’s and neighbor’s safety could depend on it. When plowing or shoveling, avoid piling snow in front of or on hydrants as this may damage the hydrant. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!



Natural Disaster Planning

The increasingly severe weather experienced in the Acton area has caused a number of prolonged power outages in the past year. During these events, customers continued to benefit from running water. Our water system is designed to meet short term and longer term disturbances such as these power outages. We have emergency power generation at a number of our facilities and four storage tanks to provide pressurized water for domestic and fire protection needs. In the aftermath of hurricane Irene and the Halloween snow storm, one of our facilities in North Acton was able to run for six days after each event on our natural gas powered generator. Not that we want to run in emergency mode, however, it is comforting to know the systems are in place and functioning to meet customer demands.

Turning to our neighbors in a time of need is also possible. We maintain emergency interconnections with Concord, Littleton, and Maynard should we ever need to borrow water in an emergency. In the event that we require assistance from a neighbor or have a major water emergency, the District belongs to a mutual aid system of water and wastewater utilities throughout Massachusetts. This enables us to borrow equipment and supplies, qualify for disaster relief, and even share operators should the need exist.

Staff training in responding to emergencies, planning for extreme weather and reducing the impact of our operations are

also included in our toolbox that helps keep the water flowing. As we plan future system improvements, it has caused us to take a serious look at our efficiency, system integrity, sustainability, and emergency procedures in these changing times. Additionally, as we plan future capital improvements in the treatment and delivery of water, reliability and energy efficiency have become primary considerations. Self sufficiency is a continuing goal of the District both in terms of emergency preparedness and meeting future demand of our customers.

Get Involved

Every year a District Annual Meeting is held similar to the annual Acton Town Meeting. This year it is on Wednesday March 21st at 7:30 pm at the Acton Public Safety Facility. All voters in the Town of Acton are invited to attend. A copy of the District’s Annual Report and Warrant Articles is included in this mailing highlighting the past year and laying out the budget and capital investments for the coming fiscal year. The Commissioners typically meet twice per month at 7:30 pm at the District office located at 693 Massachusetts Avenue. Please visit www.actonwater.com for a complete schedule of upcoming meetings.

An additional way to get involved is helping spread the message of drinking water. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) has developed a “marketing” campaign to highlight the benefits of and build support for our public water systems. The four key benefits that the Water District is instrumental in providing to our customers include protection of public health, economic support for Acton, quality of life, and fire protection. The New England Section of the AWWA is sponsoring a video contest where you can explain how your public water system works to provide public health. Details on the contest may be found at www.newwa.org. Submissions will be accepted from February 1st through March 31, 2012. Prizes will be awarded and the winners announced during Drinking Water Week (May 7–13). If you are interested in learning more about this contest or would like to understand the public health benefits of Acton’s water supply system, please contact Matthew Mostoller at 978-263-9107 or matt@actonwater.com.

Happy 100th Anniversary

In 1912 the RMS Titanic made her maiden voyage and tragically sank crossing the icy North Atlantic, Fenway Park officially opened, Arizona and New Mexico became states, and the West and South Water Supply District of Acton was incorporated.

Originally formed to ensure an adequate supply of water for fire protection and domestic needs, the District grew to support both economic development and residential growth. It first expanded its boundaries in 1947 and again in 1962, to include all of Acton. It was in 1962 that it became today’s



Water Supply District of Acton, or the Acton Water District, as it is commonly called. Help us celebrate our Centennial and learn more about your local water supply. Mark your calendar for May 5, 2012 when the District will hold a morning session at the Acton Memorial Library including a professional panel of local experts on water related issues. In the afternoon, please join us for a barbecue lunch and open house at our North Acton Water Treatment Plant.

Be Water Wise

The Acton Water District is continually trying to help our customers use water more efficiently and promote water conserving practices. We participate in a number of regional and national organizations that are engaged in promoting water conservation. One of these organizations, the Alliance for Water Efficiency, recently announced a new website to help homeowners identify water use based on your individual actions. Please take a few moments to visit the Home Water Works website at www.home-water-works.org and learn about water use and water waste in your home. If you have any questions regarding the information provided by this website or on water savings programs, please contact Matthew Mostoller, Environmental Manager at matt@actonwater.com or by calling 978-263-9107.



Alliance
for Water
Efficiency
MEMBER

After three years of offering limited rebates to our customers for installing water efficient toilets and washing machines, the Water District will offer rebates on an ongoing basis. To be eligible for a rebate, you must purchase a WaterSense rated toilet or Consortium for Energy Efficiency (CEE) Tier 3 washing machine. An application and copy of the receipt must be submitted within 90 days of the date of purchase. Applications and lists of eligible toilets and washing machines are available at www.actonwater.com. Only residential accounts in good standing are eligible. The District reserves the right to limit the number of rebates and may require an inspection to verify the installation before or after a rebate is granted.

WR Grace Site Update

Cleanup work continues at the W.R. Grace Superfund site in South Acton. During the summer and fall of 2011, two sediment removal actions occurred at the site. This included removing arsenic and manganese contaminated sediments from the North Lagoon Wetlands adjacent to Fort Pond Brook and in Sinking Pond. These contaminants were deposited respectively, as a result of being mobilized from soils by the volatile organic compound (VOC) contamination in the area and from discharges from the former aquifer restoration system that did not have the ability to remove inorganic contaminants. Once access was gained to these



Superfund contractors removing sediment from Sinking Pond

sites, dredging occurred and wet materials were allowed to dry before being removed from the site for disposal. All of the liquid collected in the dewatering area was treated using the metals removal systems located at the landfill area groundwater treatment system. The United States Environmental Protection Agency will prepare a status update in the spring of 2012 summarizing the work completed this past year. Information on the Superfund site can be found at www.epa.gov/region1/superfund and searching for "Acton" or by contacting local stakeholders such as the Acton Water District, Acton Health Department, and Acton Citizens for Environmental Safety (ACES).



What is it?

Please email your answers to webgeek@actonwater.com. Winners (and the correct answer) will be posted in the next *Water Words* notice.

Acton Water



District

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What was it?

We had three customers that correctly identified the mystery photo from the Summer 2011 *Water Words*. Congratulations to Rob Bukowski, Richard Doherty, and Joe Robb for correctly identifying the photo as air stripping media. Thousands of these "balls" are located in the aeration towers that are used to remove volatile organic compounds from our ground-water sources. Recently the Water District began regenerating this media instead of disposing of it and using new media. The aeration towers also serve to increase the pH without the use of chemicals.

