EMBRACING THE FUTURE BY PLANNING TODAY...

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 24, 2023

Contact: Kate Gibbs, kgibbs@wcwd.org, 510-390-4844

WEST COUNTY WASTEWATER

West County Wastewater's Storm Update, January 2023

(RICHMOND, CA) Throughout the rainstorms that have pummeled Contra Costa County since the new year, West County Wastewater (WCW) staff has worked continuously to manage the onslaught of excess wastewater (sewage) and stormwater coming to the Water Quality Resource & Recovery Plant ("Plant") in Richmond.

WCW's number one priority is the protection of public health and the safety of our community and employees.

During the recent storms, WCW has recorded *no* Sanitary Sewer Overflows from the sanitary sewer collection system, the network of sewer pipes that convey the wastewater to the Plant.

The Numbers:
Since December 26, 17.2" of rain has fallen in the area.
Year-to-date (starting at the end of September 2022), 21.8 inches of rain have fallen. For comparison, the annual average rainfall is about 25 inches, and last year's total was 21.6 inches according to the Contra Costa County-maintained rain gauge at Richmond City Hall. See it HERE

During the first 15 days of January, Plant influent flow averaged 21.3 Millions of Gallons per Day (MGD). Over the past week, the average daily amount processed by the Plant was 23.9 MGD per day. The wet weather design capacity is 21 MGD per the Cal Environmental Protection Agency-issued National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. In addition to the flow through the Plant, excess influent, in the range of 10 – 12 MGD, was being sent to the equalization (EQ) basins (see below). Adding those together, between 26 and 35 MGD arrived at the Plant during the period where an average day sees about 8 MGD.

Equalization Basins (EQ Basins):
WCW has three EQ basins, large, in-ground structures that catch and store excess stormwater when necessary (i.e., during significant rainstorms.). Their total combined capacity is fifty-three million gallons.
Beginning Wednesday, January11, at 5:40 p.m., WCW's EQ storage reached its maximum capacity, and the basins began an uncontrolled, intermittent overflow into San Pablo Bay through approximately midnight on Saturday, January 14, with an approximate 41 MG lost All of the proper reporting has been made, staff and various work groups have completed the sampling and monitoring of the overflow condition.

Preparing for the Future:
While there is no way to ever anticipate weather events of this size, throughout the past years, WCW has worked diligently to improve the infrastructure, which supports our system continuously.

As part of WCW's Clean & Green Project, a fourth EQ Basin is currently under construction and anticipated to be completed later this year and before the next rainy season. This fourth EQ Basin will add another 23 million gallons of storage, giving WCW 76 million gallons, preparing us for a 100-year storm.

Throughout the year, WCW staff performs regular, preventative maintenance of pipes. This ongoing work significantly affects and improves how efficiently wastewater and water flow through pipes throughout the County. When pipes are clogged, cracked, or degraded due to tree roots, grease or flushable wipes, it drastically reduces the amount of water and wastewater that can flow. Add an unusual amount of rain, and unsafe overflows occur.

To reduce infiltration and inflow and increase capacity, WCW has completed a significant amount of capital improvement work including replacing approximately 3 miles of pipe- 650 feet since last June 2022.

WCW and our community continue to work together to bring laterals into compliance, which significantly decreases infiltration, inflow, and overflows. These efforts have provided much needed improvement in West County's infrastructure and resulted in more effectively transporting wastewater from our communities to our processing plant.

###

West County Wastewater (WCW) was founded in 1921 to protect and serve the public health of the community through the construction and maintenance of a sewer system. Today, WCW provides sewage collection, treatment and disposal services to approximately 34,000 residences and 2,450 commercial and industrial businesses. WCW serves a total population of about 100,000 residents across 16.9 square miles. Governed by a five-member Board of Directors, WCW embraces practices that promote energy efficiency and environmental stewardship.