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Mayor

Water Reuse and Conservation

Protecting Our Water Supply

When rain falls on land, it either seeps into the ground or becomes runoff flowing into streams, lakes and rivers. The Columbus Department of Public Utilities draws from surface water sources -- Hoover Reservoir on Big Walnut Creek, Griggs and O'Shaughnessy Reservoirs on the Scioto River -- as well as ground water collected in wells located in southern Franklin County.



Polluted runoff is the largest threat to water quality. Rain water travels across yards, pavement, rooftops and streets carrying pollutants into storm drains that empty into nearby rivers or into our sewer system. Pollutants come from every day activities including the use of pesticides, fertilizers and soaps, as well as

yard waste, pet waste, oil and grease.

Did you know that you can save money on your water bill and help protect the quality of our source water just by making a few changes in your gardening practices?

Here are some ideas:

Reuse Rain Water

Collect stormwater in a rain barrel for later use. Placed under a downspout, rain barrels collect some of the water that runs off your roof, storing it for later use. Attach a soaker hose to water garden plants or fill a watering can to use on potted plants.



Garden with Native Plants

Native plants have an extensive root system that absorbs moisture from deep in the soil. This means that once established, they require very little water. Because they have adapted to local soil and climate conditions, native plants thrive without fertilizer.

The deep roots break up clay soil increasing its ability to soak in stormwater, slowing the flow and filtering pollutants before they enter our waterways. All this adds up to less time and money spent on landscaping and cleaner streams and rivers.

Columbus GreenSpot Backyard Conservation Program

City of Columbus GreenSpot members are invited to buy discounted rain barrels while supplies last (limit one per household, Columbus residents only). Not yet a member? It's easy to join at www.ColumbusGreenSpot.org. Members can attend a rain barrel workshop in person or pass a quiz online. More information, registration and the online quiz can be found at www.ColumbusRainBarrels.org. For questions, call Franklin Soil and Water at 486-9613



Join Columbus Public Utilities on Facebook for conservation tips and updates.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sewer Overflows

What are CSOs and SSOs?

Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are discharges of wastewater and stormwater from the combined sewer system that serves downtown and surrounding areas. Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) are discharges of wastewater from the sanitary sewer system. Sewer overflows can occur at various discharge points along local waterways when volume temporarily exceeds capacity, typically during wet weather.

Why do overflows exist?

Many years ago, prior to the existence of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Clean Water Act, it was common for such relief points in a sewer system to exist in order to prevent backups into homes during major rain events.

Are overflows an issue in other cities?

Yes; it is the biggest challenge facing most sewer districts today.

What is the City of Columbus doing about overflows?

The Department of Public Utilities developed a Wet Weather Management Plan in 2005, identifying an estimated \$2.5 billion in sewer capital improvements over 40 years. Sewer improvement projects are underway.

How will these projects affect rates?

Sanitary sewer rates are expected to continue to rise in order to fund the improvements. An affordability analysis was conducted to ascertain the community's ability to finance the projects. Revenue needs are reviewed annually.

How are sewer improvements financed?

Funding is provided through customer sewer rate revenue and low-interest loan programs such as the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund through the Ohio EPA.

How will central Ohio residents benefit?

Anything that improves our environment benefits our community. Solving the capacity issues will also reduce sewer backups into basements.

Where are the overflow points located?

Discharge locations are along the Olentangy River from Worthington to First Avenue, on the Scioto River from around Neil Avenue to S.R. 104, and on Alum Creek



from Main Street to I-70. The locations are marked with signage.

How many discharge locations are in Columbus?

Columbus has 32 SSO, 18 CSO and two SSO/CSO discharge points that can potentially overflow. Additional locations in the Columbus area are owned by other municipalities, two of which are maintained by Columbus under contract.

How often do they overflow?

The most active one is on the Scioto River near Whittier Street, which receives partial treatment. The activity at this CSO location will be significantly reduced through improvements to be completed by 2014. Frequency and volume depend on the amount of rainfall received. More information is available at: www.gis.columbus.gov/ssocso.

If I see an overflow sign, is it safe to swim?

No. First, be aware that swimming in Columbus waterways is prohibited by city code and is considered a drowning risk in some locations due to lowhead dams and utility crossings. Avoid water contact near a marked overflow location, especially following periods of heavy rain. For more information on possible health and environmental effects, please visit the Web address above.

Can residents help prevent overflows?

Yes. Please check your downspouts and foundation drains to make sure they are not connected to the sanitary sewer. These outdated connections, common in homes built before 1963, add excess water to the system during rain events. For a brochure on how to disconnect downspouts, please call 645-2926. Please dispose of grease properly to avoid blockages in city and home sewers, which can cause overflows and basement backups. Place grease in the trash in a sealed container such as a coffee can; do not pour down the drain. Make needed repairs on your home sewer line.

Should residents report overflows and backups?

Yes. Please report sewer overflows or basement backups in Columbus immediately to the 24-hour Sewer Maintenance Operations Center by calling 311, 645-3111 or 645-7102. Reporting a basement backup is necessary to determine eligibility for the Project Dry Basement backflow prevention program for single and two-family homes in Columbus.