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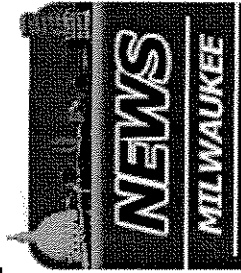
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MMSD needs overhaul, report says

Sewer district wastes money on projects that fall short, group says

By STEVE SCHULTZE
sschultze@journal sentinel.com

Last Updated: Sept. 7, 2003

The Milwaukee sewerage district has wasted huge sums of public money for ill-conceived projects that haven't solved dumping problems, a new report charges.

The solution, according to the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute: a major overhaul of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District to make it more accountable.

The conservative-leaning institute unleashes blistering criticism of the sewerage district in its report and calls for a change from the current system in which the Milwaukee mayor appoints a majority of the 11-member MMSD Commission members.

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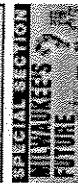
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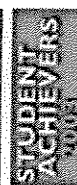
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The report makes no specific recommendation on how to reshape the district.

"The lack of accountability is breathtaking," said institute president James H. Miller in the new report, which will be formally released today. The sewerage district has taxing authority and plans to levy \$71.9 million in property taxes in 2004, unchanged from this year's sum.

Milwaukee Mayor John O. Norquist called the institute report "a politically motivated effort to restart the sewer wars." The sewer wars were ignited by an unsuccessful effort to base sewer funding on usage instead of property values. The battle went on for years and pitted the city against its suburbs.

"The real goal of changing governance is to give a tax break to Waukesha and Ozaukee counties at the expense of Milwaukee County taxpayers," Norquist said.

MMSD Commission Chairman Dennis Grzezinski called the report biased and "an embarrassing diatribe." Sewage dumping had been trimmed from 50 incidents a year before the deep tunnels were built to an average of about 21/2 annually, which has helped to clean up local rivers and Lake Michigan, he said.

Kevin Shafer, sewerage district's executive director, declined to comment on the report.

Spent billions

In an interview, Miller said the sewerage district has failed to curb raw sewage dumping even after spending billions of dollars on expensive sewer projects. State and federal regulators have not firmly enforced pollution laws against the district, he said.

With perhaps \$2 billion in sewer upgrades on the drawing boards, something should be done to make the district more accountable

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before that money is spent, Miller said.

"There seems to be almost no accountability with these guys," he said. "They seem to be able to almost do what they want," unhindered by regulators, Miller said. Vague standards on water quality from the state Department of Natural Resources and federal Environmental Protection Agency have hampered efforts to hold the sewerage district accountable for dumping, according to the institute's report.

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About 13 billion gallons of untreated sewage have been dumped by the district since late 1993. The district in 2001 agreed to spend \$1 billion on sewer upgrades to settle dumping charges brought by the DNR. The biggest project, now under construction in Wauwatosa, is a \$116 million link to the deep tunnel system. The 20-foot diameter, 7-mile tunnel, being drilled under the Menomonee River, will connect with the deep tunnel system.

Additional spending is expected after a new long-range plan is developed.

The report reviewed nearly 200 news articles, some as old as 1913, as well as other reports and audits on MMSD to assess the district's performance.

Among the findings:

- The \$3 billion deep tunnel and related sewer upgrades - the state's most expensive public works project, completed a decade ago - has not lived up to its billing to virtually eliminate dumping. Expectations about the tunnels' capability to halt dumping exceeded the results, though no firm standard for the tunnels was uncovered by the institute review.
- The sewerage district, with support from the late Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier, continually fought to trim costs and scale back the scope of the tunnel project through a series of court battles in the 1970s. MMSD argued successfully to avoid lining much of the deep tunnel system with concrete, a move that in

retrospect has proved a costly mistake because of leakage.

- Water quality was expected to dramatically improve as a result of the tunnel's construction; instead there's been only a slight improvement in Milwaukee waterways and worse pollution of suburban waters, the report says.

The report says district officials have responded to criticism "with redirection, excuses and denial." The district has often responded to questions about its dumping by replying that it had successfully captured and treated far more sewage than it had dumped, for example, the report said. Among the district explanations offered for dumping: extra heavy rainstorms, global warming and leaky suburban sewers, the report says.

State Sen. Alberta Darling, in an interview Friday, said she plans to introduce legislation this fall to change the sewerage district's governing body, probably to an elected one. Miller and Darling said the institute's report was done independently of Darling's push for an district makeover.

Darling (R-River Hills) said she would consult with local officials and residents before introducing her overhaul, which she said probably won't be acted on until spring. An effort by Darling in 1996 to put an elected board in charge of the district failed.

From the Sept. 8, 2003 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

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v050802a

Asbjornson, Karen

From: eCommunications [eCommunications@mmsd.com]
Sent: Monday, September 08, 2003 6:52 AM
Subject: MMSD statement

September 8, 2003

A Statement from MMSD Commission Chairman Dennis Grzezinski Regarding Distorted "Research" from WPRI

The Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI) should be ashamed of its latest report "Government Pollution-The Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewerage District's (*sic*) Impact on Lake Michigan." It is an embarrassing diatribe. The "research" it claims to have conducted amounts to reading some old newspaper stories, sprinkling in some half-truths along with outright falsehoods, then jumping to wholly unsupported conclusions.

Any legitimate analysis of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) performance would cite experts with real knowledge of water quality issues or wastewater treatment. Not a single such credible source is named in the WPRI document. The author made no effort to contact MMSD for information or perspective.

In fact, since MMSD completed the Deep Tunnel and the Water Pollution Abatement Program, the water in Milwaukee area rivers and Lake Michigan is measurably cleaner. That is directly attributable to the Deep Tunnel and the Water Pollution Abatement Program reductions in sewer overflows. Before the Deep Tunnel went online, rain-induced sewer overflows exceeded fifty per year. Now, there is an average of about two and a half such overflows annually, and there have been no weather-related overflows for more than a year. This is an improvement unmatched by any large metropolitan community in the nation.

WPRI board member and Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) President Timothy Sheehy wrote to the MMSD commissioners this week saying:

"...The MMAC has been following the MMSD performance and feels that the district is being run efficiently. Costs of the Milwaukee operation, when compared to other areas of the country are very favorable.

"...Headlines can sometimes ignore that the MMSD is running a cost effective system and one that is very favorable to its national competition in both cost and performance."

A prominent member of the Wisconsin State Senate, Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) wrote to the MMSD executive director on Thursday praising the district's fiscal constraint and quality services:

“...I want to commend you, your staff and the Commissioners of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District for your efforts to deliver a budget that does not increase property taxes. You have demonstrated that by careful planning, government can operate like a business and deliver quality services without increasing prices.”

In its latest report, the WPRI agenda is clear: they want the customers of MMSD to surrender their oversight of wastewater treatment to suburban and rural interests. WPRI is attempting to restart the sewer wars of the 1980's with distortion and misrepresentation. Its report is a seriously flawed attempt to sway public policy.

####

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bgraffin@mmsd.com

Asbjornson, Karen

From: Halbur, Jennifer
Sent: Thursday, September 04, 2003 9:04 AM
To: Seaquist, Sara; Asbjornson, Karen
Subject: FW: MMSD Public Hearing
CR inbox
-----Original Message-----
From: eCommunications [mailto:eCommunications@mmsd.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 02, 2003 2:14 PM
Subject: MMSD Public Hearing

We want your input on our 2004 budgets

Public hearing September 4, 2003

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) is proposing to keep its 2004 property tax collections at the same amount customers paid in 2003. We're also doing everything we can to hold the line on our 2004 user charges.

September 4, 2003 is your chance to ask questions and learn more about where your tax dollars go to help protect our rivers and lakes. It is also your chance to comment and discuss the major construction projects included in the 2004 budget.

Also, find out more about the recent performance review of United Water Services Inc., the private contractor that operates and maintains MMSD's sewer system and wastewater treatment plants.

MMSD Public Hearing

September 4, 2003

6:00 p.m.

Wauwatosa Public Library, 7635 W. North Avenue

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09/08/2003

Asbjornson, Karen

From: eCommunications [eCommunications@mmsd.com]

Sent: Tuesday, September 09, 2003 11:19 AM

Subject: MMSD editorial

We thought this editorial from today's Journal Sentinel might interest you.

Editorial: Paper flow on overflows

From the Journal Sentinel

Last Updated: Sept. 8, 2003

In an editorial thinly disguised as a study, the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute has endorsed a governance makeover at the Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewerage District. Citing continuing problems involving overflows and expensive projects, the report "Government Pollution: The Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewerage District's Impact on Lake Michigan" suggests that the way to end the overflows is to end the current way the district is governed.

The district needs to be more accountable, according to the report. To accomplish that, the report proposes - well, actually nothing beyond, "This system of governance for the MMSD needs to change to ensure better and more informed decisions are made." Real studies tend to be a tad more helpful than that.

Maybe there is a good argument for changing the way MMSD is governed. We just wish the WPRI would make it. While the study cites numerous district problems over the years, it doesn't show how the current governance structure contributed to those problems or how changing the governance would solve them.

The study also fails to examine how other districts are governed and doesn't discuss different governing models. It doesn't provide a serious history of the local sewerage district and its predecessors. It provides few academic or scientific citations. In fact, of the 171 footnotes in the report, only 18 are *not* newspaper articles. While newspapers are good and worthy sources of information, it is rare for them to make up the bulk of citations in academic and technical studies of sewerage districts, even if the issue is simple governance.

While the 25-page report doesn't offer dispassionate suggestions or an academic review - or even something new - it does a fine job of rehashing every criticism ever made of the district. Many of them, we should add, have been made on this page.

There continue to be disturbing problems that the Deep Tunnel system should have resolved, but the facts are that the area's water quality is better than it was before the system was built and that the number of overflows has been reduced dramatically from pre-Deep Tunnel days.

Should those overflows be further reduced? Absolutely, and MMSD officials need to have their feet held to the fire on that. It may be that an elected board of commissioners would do that more effectively than the current system.

09/09/2003

Coincidentally, state Sen. Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) said last week that she plans to introduce legislation this fall to change the sewerage district's governing body, probably to an elected one. We'll be happy to listen to her arguments. We just hope they are more serious than those provided by the WPRI's diatribe against the district.

From the Sept. 9, 2003 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

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Asbjornson, Karen

From: eCommunications [eCommunications@mmsd.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 16, 2003 1:48 PM
Subject: MMSD storm update

Storm Update

September 12-to-14, 2003

As a result of weekend storms, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) captured and treated 755-million gallons of rain and wastewater at its two treatment plants.

The Deep Tunnel stored a total of 117-million gallons, which would have spilled into local rivers if MMSD did not have the 405-million gallon storage vessel. Rain and wastewater are stored in the tunnel until there is enough capacity at the treatment plants to clean the extra flow.

On dry days, MMSD typically cleans an average of 180-million gallons to 200-million gallons of wastewater each day.

No overflows or diversions occurred during the weekend storms.

To see rainfall totals in the area, go to www.mmsd.com <<http://www.mmsd.com>> and click on the storm update.

Know someone who would like to receive MMSD news or environmental updates? To subscribe or unsubscribe, send a message to: bgraffin@mmsd.com

Asbjornson, Karen

From: Sen. Darling
Sent: Friday, September 19, 2003 12:58 PM
To: *Legislative All Assembly; *Legislative All Senate
Subject: Co-Sponsorship of LRB 3144/1: design-build authority for MMSD

Carol Roessler
 STATE SENATOR

DATE: September 19, 2003
TO: Legislative Colleagues
FROM: Senator Darling
RE: Co-sponsorship of LRB 3144/1: granting limited design-build construction authority to MMSD

I am introducing legislation that would allow MMSD to have design-build construction authority for up to five pilot projects, each of which must cost at least \$4 million.

Please call or email my office (6-5830) by 5 p.m. Friday, October 3rd if you are interested in co-sponsoring this bill.

MMSD is seeking authority to use design-build authority in a five project pilot program in order to realize the same benefits the state now enjoys. Only five projects, whose total cost is in excess of \$4 million each, will be authorized to use the design-build methodology. This will allow the legislature to approve the design-build method of project delivery while also ensuring a thorough review of the approach to determine its benefits.

Design-build has emerged in recent years, both in public and private sectors, as an important and viable project delivery option. Design-build is an agreement to perform both the design and the construction under one contract between the owner and the design-build team. Under s. 13.48(19), the State of Wisconsin often uses this contracting method. However, all other public contracting entities such as MMSD must utilize the lowest responsible bidder pattern. Design-build offers a single point of responsibility for design and construction services, fast-track completion and a guaranteed maximum practice. Anticipated benefits over current practice include cost savings and time savings.

I am hoping to generate significant support for this proposal by listening and reacting to the concerns of all interested groups, and by passing a true compromise piece of legislation that realizes real benefits for the taxpayers of Wisconsin.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill authorizes the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) to let not more than five contracts for public construction using the design-build construction process, which is defined as a project delivery and procurement process for the design, construction, repair, renovation, installation, or demolition of a public works project under which a single entity is responsible for the professional design services and construction services related to the project. Under the bill, the design-build construction process may be used only for contracts, the estimated cost of which exceeds \$4,000,000.

If MMSD wishes to construct a public work using the design-build construction process, MMSD must use a two-stage selection process. Under the first stage, MMSD must publish a notice that includes a project statement that describes the project requirements and

WISCONSIN STATE SENATE



design goals for the project, detailed submission requirements, selection procedures, selection criteria, the composition of the selection panel, and whether the district will offer a stipend to unsuccessful design-build teams, and, if so, the amount of the stipend. If the public work is for the construction of underground sewers or tunnels, MMSD must also prepare a geotechnical report, which must be issued as part of the first stage of the selection process.

Following receipt of the bids, MMSD must allow no more than five design-build teams to participate in the second stage of the selection process, unless MMSD receives fewer than three statements of qualification and initial project approach proposals. The selection of the finalist teams in the first stage of the process must be based on factors that include the background, experience, and qualifications of the members of the teams, and the statement of qualifications and the initial project approach proposal. In the second stage of the selection process, MMSD must choose from among the five or fewer finalist teams if MMSD determines that at least one of the finalists will be able to construct the public work in a way that is satisfactory to MMSD. MMSD must conduct interviews of each team, and each team must make a presentation. The criteria to be used in making a final selection may include the quality of the proposed design, the extent to which a proposal demonstrates compliance with the project statement, the amount of participation of a disadvantaged business, the estimated cost of the project, and a guaranteed maximum price for the project. If MMSD enters into a contract with one of the teams, that design-build team must obtain bonding to guarantee completion of the project.

If the public work involves the construction of underground sewers or tunnels, the contract must have a differing site conditions clause. If the contractor discovers any of a number of physical conditions at the site that differ materially from the conditions stated in the contract or from conditions that are ordinarily encountered in work to which the contract applies, the contractor must promptly notify MMSD in writing. MMSD must then investigate the conditions. If MMSD agrees with the contractor's assessment of the conditions and MMSD determines that the differing site conditions will increase or decrease the contractor's costs or time spent to perform the work under the contract, MMSD must make an equitable adjustment to the contract. Under current law, the Milwaukee County board may let a contract for the construction of a sheriff's department training academy using the design-build construction process, although the process is not defined.

Please call or email my office (6-5830) by 5 p.m. Friday, October 3rd if you are interested in cosponsoring this bill.

Immediate Release
September 22, 2003

Contact: Bill Graffin, Public Information Manager, (414) 225-2077

MMSD Commission paves way for no-increase budget in 2004

(Milwaukee, WI) – The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD)

Commissioners cleared the way today for the District to have an overall budget that costs taxpayers and customers the same in 2004 as it did in 2003.

By making deeper cuts to the 2004 capital levy before passage today, commissioners offset the amount of money that the operations and maintenance budget is expected to rise in 2004.

“This is a year when government at all levels must find a way to tighten belts and leave as much money as possible in the hands of customers,” said State Rep. G. Spencer Coggs, the MMSD commissioner who proposed the move.

The District’s capital budget is funded with property taxes. Users charges pay for the operations and maintenance budget, which is expected to increase 1.3% for 2004 upon final passage.

“This is an overall levy freeze that will not jeopardize any major projects or efforts to improve water quality during the next year,” said Dennis Grzezinski, MMSD commission chairman.

Commissioners adopted the capital budget on Monday after unanimously voting to reduce that capital plan by \$556,000. Those cuts will offset an expected \$556,000 increase in user fees, proposed in the operations budget.

Three public hearings will be held in October to discuss the operations and maintenance budget. All take place at the MMSD headquarters, 260 West Seeboth Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The hearing dates and times are as follows: October 6, 2003 at 1:00 p.m., October 13, 2003 at 6:00 p.m. and October 20, 2003 at 8:45 p.m.

Original URL: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/metro/sep03/171779.asp>

MMSD, in turnabout, will block condoms

\$2 million project intended to keep them out of lake

By STEVE SCHULTZE and MARIE ROHDE
sschultze@journalsentinel.com

Last Updated: Sept. 22, 2003

In an abrupt about-face, Milwaukee sewerage district officials decided Monday to launch a \$2 million project using new technology to prevent used condoms from escaping into Lake Michigan from the Jones Island sewage treatment plant.

The move came after Wisconsin Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager told the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District it faced possible prosecution over a reported June release of condoms found in Lake Michigan. The MMSD Commission just three weeks ago had rejected a staff recommendation to authorize the system for catching stray condoms.

Lautenschlager, in an interview Monday, said the state Justice Department had been reviewing the matter, based on news accounts of a fisherman's complaint of a "condom slick" in Milwaukee harbor.

Justice officials told the district if the Department of Natural Resources had referred the matter to them, "we would have taken a hard look at it and likely would have prosecuted it aggressively," Lautenschlager said.

"I'm encouraged they took action," she said, when told that MMSD commissioners approved the project.

Was MMSD at fault?

The condom-catching system was approved even though it's still not clear whether MMSD was actually responsible for the June release of perhaps hundreds of spent condoms into Milwaukee harbor, said Jeannette Bell, the mayor of West Allis and an MMSD commissioner.

Because MMSD did find that some condoms were slipping through the Jones Island plant, the upgrade became necessary, Bell said.


She said district officials were under pressure to do the expensive job, which entails installation of mesh nets to catch the prophylactics from escaping the treatment plant. Bell led efforts on the commission earlier this month to reject the condom project.


"I'm very angry and reluctantly forced to support this measure," Bell said.


Commissioners discussed the issue in closed session Monday before voting to approve a \$163,873 contract with Donohue & Associates to design the system that will catch the condoms. The total cost of the project will be \$2 million, plus an estimated \$96,000 for annual maintenance and operation.


The project entails installation of large mesh bags on tanks at the last stage of the sewage treatment process and have been compared to lint filters installed on home washing machine hoses.

Background

 **System:** Final filters fail to win approval (9/8/03)

 **Editorial:** MMSD's troubled waters (6/22/03)

 **Sting!** A trip on a different kind of love boat (6/17/03)

 **Condoms:** Harbor find sparks angry dispute (6/16/03)

Bell said she still was upset about having to spend the sum because some people "feel they can just flush everything down a toilet." She said flushing was an improper method for condom disposal.

MMSD Commission Chairman Dennis Grzezinski appeared equally perturbed about the project, saying it was likely that spent condoms still will be found in the lake even after the equipment is installed. That's because condoms could wash into the lake from area streams or other sources, he said.

An internal MMSD review found that an average of 32 condoms a day slip through the treatment plant. Normally, "floatables" are removed from the surface of sewage during the treatment process. Since the June complaint, MMSD has sent workers in a boat to check twice a day for condoms in the Milwaukee Harbor and remove them with nets.

The DNR had not made a decision on whether to refer the condom matter for possible prosecution, said Charles Burney, a DNR official who oversees MMSD. He said MMSD's operating permit forbids release of anything more than trace amounts of floatable materials.

Tax levy approved

In other action Monday, the commission approved a \$71.4 million property tax levy for 2004, a \$555,000 reduction from the current levy. Commissioners agreed to the cut in order to partially offset a similar increase in industrial user fees expected for next year.

The money for the cut came from delaying a landscaping project for the Jones Island plant.

The trim was made at the suggestion of state Rep. Spencer Coggs (D-Milwaukee), who also serves on the commission. Coggs said the intent of the trim was to avoid any sewer increases next year and show taxpayers the district was sensitive to calls for tax freezes.

However, even though MMSD's overall levy and user fees won't rise next year, some individual homeowners and commercial users could see an increase based on property valuation increases, district officials said.

From the Sept. 23, 2003 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

An upcoming hearing by the Legislature's Joint Audit Committee on MMSD will likely take up the topic of sewer charges, she said. The committee has agreed to review progress made by MMSD since a July 2002 state audit faulted the district for its dumping of untreated sewage into local waterways.

Darling also said she is continuing to research the issue of changing MMSD's governance to make it more accountable, including reviewing how other metropolitan areas run their sewer utilities. She plans to introduce legislation next spring, after Milwaukee Mayor John O. Norquist leaves office, she said.

Norquist has been a strong advocate of MMSD and, as mayor, appoints a majority of the 11-member Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage Commission.

No comment from city

Steve Jacquart, Norquist's chief of staff, declined to comment on the newspaper's survey, saying he didn't know its methodology.

"All I can say is that all of the taxpayers are going to benefit from MMSD's no tax increase (for 2004)," Jacquart said. "It shows they are being responsive to ratepayers."

While MMSD has held the tax rate steady for the past several years, that has actually resulted in significant increases in the amount of money property owners had to pay because of annual increases in property values. On average, Milwaukee County property owners paid 6% more on their 2003 bills than they did the year before. The sewerage commission on Monday approved a \$71 million levy for next year for sewer projects, keeping it at the same amount as this year.

The Journal Sentinel compiled area sewer charges by contacting local officials in the 27 communities served by MMSD. Sewer charges, which are an amalgam of several items, differ from community to community.

Figures used in the newspaper's survey included those service charges, as well as the MMSD property tax levy. That levy is billed to homeowners directly in the 18 communities, including Milwaukee, that make up MMSD. In those communities, the property tax figure was based on the average assessed home value in each municipality.

Nine other suburbs outside Milwaukee County that are not part of MMSD pay fees to MMSD for sewage treatment and bill homeowners for that cost in a variety of ways.

MMSD is touting a survey of sewer rates it commissioned with Milwaukee's favorable ranking to help local development officials try to lure food processors or other industrial firms that use great quantities of water.

The local sewer system has excess capacity because of the closing of breweries and tanneries, said Kevin Shafer, MMSD executive director. Attracting more industry would help drive down industrial sewer rates even more for big local sewer customers, he said.

Miller Brewing is by far the largest commercial user of sewers, paying more than \$2 million a year to MMSD to process its wastewater.

"If we can get more industries here that use water, then you can spread that payment out, and it's good for existing industry," Shafer said.

The MMSD survey placed Milwaukee first for having the lowest industrial sewer costs of a group of 16 cities selected by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce as comparable. Milwaukee ranked seventh on industrial sewer rates on a list of 14 cities considered to have relatively low sewer charges.

Milwaukee came in 11th of 16 cities for residential sewer and water rates combined. However, the survey used only Milwaukee's residential sewer charges without accounting for the disparity between city and suburban costs.

The survey, which cost about \$10,000, was done by HNTB, a local engineering firm. The report suggests consideration of new revenue sources to help pay for sewers, including "storm water" fees to pay for flood control costs and development

"impact fees."

From the Sept. 27, 2003 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Original URL: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/metro/sep03/172952.asp>

Last Updated: Sept. 26, 2003

SEWER TABS COMPARED

THE HIGH COST OF FLUSHING

Suburban property owners on average pay 31% more for sewer service than Milwaukee property owners because rates are based on property values, according to data compiled by the Journal Sentinel.

**Estimated*

COMMUNITY IN MMSD	USE CHARGE	AVG. HOME VALUE	CAPITAL CHARGE	YEARLY TOTAL
Bayside	\$185	\$250,000*	\$425	\$610
Brown Deer	\$144	\$130,000*	\$221	\$365
Cudahy	\$109	\$114,015	\$194	\$303
Fox Point	\$165	\$328,028	\$558	\$723
Franklin	\$211	\$191,500	\$326	\$537
Glendale	\$240	\$160,000	\$295	\$535
Greenfield	\$162	\$134,000	\$285	\$447
Greendale	\$123	\$172,000	\$296	\$419
Hales Corners	\$101	\$169,042	\$287	\$388
Milwaukee	\$207	\$85,500	\$145	\$352
Oak Creek	\$191	\$143,229	\$243	\$434
River Hills	\$514	\$628,686	\$1,069	\$1,582
Shorewood	\$178	\$220,727	\$375	\$553
St. Francis	\$73	\$86,189	\$174	\$247
Wauwatosa	\$138	\$185,000	\$315	\$453
West Allis	\$191.08	\$113,745	\$193	\$384
West Milwaukee	\$88	\$100,572	\$171	\$259
Whitefish Bay	\$240	\$280,000*	\$476	\$716

COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE MMSD THAT PAY TO HAVE THEIR SEWAGE TREATED BY MMSD

Brookfield	\$389	\$254,000	\$122	\$511
Butler	499.68	N.A.	\$0	\$500
Elm Grove	\$218	\$235,000	\$421	\$639
Germantown	\$382	\$175,000	\$0	\$382
Menomonee Falls	\$591	N.A.	\$0	\$591
Mequon	\$177	\$367,000	\$466	\$643
Muskego	\$400	\$191,800	\$0	\$400
New Berlin	\$660	\$198,000	\$0	\$660
Thiensville	\$368	N.A.	\$0	\$368

AVERAGE COST: \$516.80

Sources: Municipalities

Immediate Release
September 29, 2003

Contact: Bill Graffin, Public Information Manager, (414) 225-2077

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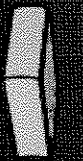
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THIS STORY

Suburbs flush with tax disparities

Daily toilet tab is a hefty \$4.33 in River Hills, 96 cents in Milwaukee

By STEVE SCHULTZE and MARIE ROHDE
sschultze@journal sentinel.com

Last Updated: Sept. 26, 2003

Flushing your toilet costs, on average, almost one-third more for Milwaukee suburban dwellers than it does for city residents, primarily a legacy of a system that bases sewer fees on property values.

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The disparity in some city-suburban comparisons is even more striking, according to a Journal Sentinel survey. At the extreme, it costs \$4.33 a day to flush in upscale River Hills - nearly \$1,600 a year. Milwaukee homeowners pay an average of 96 cents a day, or \$352 annually.

In Wauwatosa, the daily flush fee comes to

Down The Drain

Average cost per day to flush:

- River Hills - \$4.33
- Fox Point - \$1.98
- New Berlin - \$1.81
- Milwaukee - 96 cents

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\$1.24; for New Berlin residents, it averages \$1.81; in Whitefish Bay, \$1.96; and in Fox Point, doing your daily business costs \$1.98.

The cheapest place in the metro area to dispose of your wastewater is West Milwaukee: Just 71 cents a day.

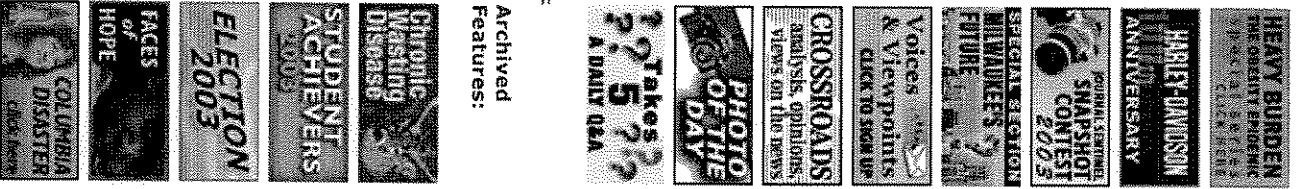
City industrial sewer rates for the city also remain a bargain - so much so that city and business leaders hope to market Milwaukee as a prime location for wet industries with a high volume of liquid waste.

The sewer fees for suburban residential users are "shocking," according to state Sen. Alberta Darling, not only in her home community of River Hills but also in a wide swath of suburbs ringing the city.

The lengthy city-suburban "sewer wars" ended in 1997 with Milwaukee prevailing: Sewer charges for the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District would be based on property values, not actual use. In practice, that's meant that the more expensive your home is, the more you pay in sewer property taxes.

It's a system that's very rare nationally.

In a new sewer rate survey commissioned by MMSD, Milwaukee was the only one of 16 comparable cities where a major portion of sewer costs falls on property-tax payers. In a much larger national survey, only 13 cities out of 117 used property taxes to pay for sewers. Most that did levy property taxes for sewers had much smaller rates than Milwaukee's, which now stands at about \$1.70 for every \$1,000 of a home's value.



West Milwaukee - 71 cents
Sewer Costs Compared

SEWER TARIFF COMPARED - THE HIGH COST OF FINISHING

*Based on property taxes for a 1000 sq. ft. home in West Milwaukee. The sewer rate is based on the property value. The sewer rate is based on the property value. The sewer rate is based on the property value.

City	Rate	City	Rate	City	Rate
West Milwaukee	71	Wauwatosa	125	Menomonee Falls	135
Whitefish Bay	196	Waukesha	140	Brookfield	145
New Berlin	124	Franklin	150	South Milwaukee	155
Fox Point	198	Greenfield	160	West Allis	165
...

Graphic/Journal Sentinel/Comparison

Although the sewer wars are over, the conflict over sewer costs is not, said Darling, a Republican and vocal critic of MMSD.

"The battle isn't over," Darling said. "The disparity is a huge issue."

She said sewer taxes, along with other property taxes, have become a critical state issue. The high sewer tax paid by many suburban homeowners is helping drive people to lower-cost suburbs or even out of state, she said.

An upcoming hearing by the Legislature's Joint Audit Committee on MMSD will likely take up the topic of sewer charges, she said. The committee has agreed to review progress made by MMSD since a July 2002 state audit faulted the district for its dumping of untreated sewage into local waterways.

Darling also said she is continuing to research the issue of changing MMSD's governance to make it more accountable, including reviewing how other metropolitan areas run their sewer utilities. She plans to introduce legislation next spring, after Milwaukee Mayor John O. Norquist leaves office, she said.

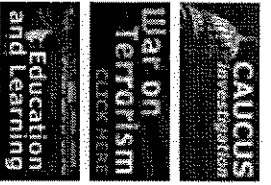
Norquist has been a strong advocate of MMSD and, as mayor, appoints a majority of the 11-member Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage Commission.

No comment from city

Steve Jacquart, Norquist's chief of staff, declined to comment on the newspaper's survey, saying he didn't know its methodology.

"All I can say is that all of the taxpayers are going to benefit from MMSD's no tax increase (for 2004)," Jacquart said. "It shows they are being responsive to ratepayers."

While MMSD has held the tax rate steady for the past several years, that has actually resulted in significant increases in the amount of



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money property owners had to pay because of annual increases in property values. On average, Milwaukee County property owners paid 6% more on their 2003 bills than they did the year before. The sewerage commission on Monday approved a \$71 million levy for next year for sewer projects, keeping it at the same amount as this year.

The Journal Sentinel compiled area sewer charges by contacting local officials in the 27 communities served by MMSD. Sewer charges, which are an amalgam of several items, differ from community to community.

Figures used in the newspaper's survey included those service charges, as well as the MMSD property tax levy. That levy is billed to homeowners directly in the 18 communities, including Milwaukee, that make up MMSD. In those communities, the property tax figure was based on the average assessed home value in each municipality.

Nine other suburbs outside Milwaukee County that are not part of MMSD pay fees to MMSD for sewage treatment and bill homeowners for that cost in a variety of ways.

MMSD is touting a survey of sewer rates it commissioned with Milwaukee's favorable ranking to help local development officials try to lure food processors or other industrial firms that use great quantities of water.

The local sewer system has excess capacity because of the closing of breweries and tanneries, said Kevin Shafer, MMSD executive director. Attracting more industry would help drive down industrial sewer rates even more for big local sewer customers, he said.

Miller Brewing is by far the largest commercial user of sewers, paying more than \$2 million a year to MMSD to process its wastewater.

"If we can get more industries here that use water, then you can spread that payment out, and it's good for existing industry," Shafer said.

The MMMSD survey placed Milwaukee first for having the lowest industrial sewer costs of a group of 16 cities selected by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce as comparable. Milwaukee ranked seventh on industrial sewer rates on a list of 14 cities considered to have relatively low sewer charges.

Milwaukee came in 11th of 16 cities for residential sewer and water rates combined. However, the survey used only Milwaukee's residential sewer charges without accounting for the disparity between city and suburban costs.

The survey, which cost about \$10,000, was done by HNTB, a local engineering firm. The report suggests consideration of new revenue sources to help pay for sewers, including "storm water" fees to pay for flood control costs and development "impact fees."

From the Sept. 27, 2003 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

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Asbjornson, Karen

From: Seaquist, Sara
Sent: Monday, September 29, 2003 4:18 PM
To: Asbjornson, Karen
Subject: FW: MMSD news release
CR email...

-----Original Message-----
From: eCommunications [mailto:eCommunications@mmsd.com]
Sent: Monday, September 29, 2003 4:09 PM
Subject: MMSD news release

**Immediate Release
September 29, 2003**

Contact: Bill Graffin, Pubic Information Manager, (414) 225-2077

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Know someone who would like to receive MMSD news or environmental updates? To subscribe or unsubscribe, send a message to: bgraffin@mmsd.com

Statement from Dennis Grzezinski, Commission Chairman

Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District is very concerned with the "facts" as reported in today's Journal Sentinel. This article does a grave disservice to our region by confusing user charges with capital charges. All users pay the same rate for the use of the system. Capital charges are not a function of use. If capital charges were charged on a usage basis, then we would drastically increase the rates for industries that use large volumes of water, like Miller Brewery. What would that do to our region's economic vitality?

The facts are that everyone pays the same to MMSD per gallon of wastewater treated and that everyone pays the same rate on their property tax bill per \$1000 of equalized valuation. In other words, any \$150,000 house in any of our communities that uses one gallon of water would pay the same amount to MMSD. This pays for the costs to operate this infrastructure, the costs to expand the infrastructure to serve all of us, and allows our properties to have value. This rate structure is exactly the same as when we pay for police protection, fire protection, and schools. In fact, we pay for these services whether we use them or not and sewer service is always available.

The article points out the various costs per community, it does not touch on the ability of the ratepayer to pay for these services. The equalization of payments currently adopted by the PSC allows for our region to grow. It just makes sense that someone who has made the commitment to invest in a \$500,000 house would also want to pay more to make sure that this house has sewer service. Additionally, lower valued homes in our region are generally built in a denser neighborhood. Less capital investment is needed to service these properties than a larger home built on a larger lot, i.e. more length of sewer pipe results in more capital investment.

The issue over these billing systems was resolved years ago by unanimous Public Service Commission (PSC) and Wisconsin Supreme Court decisions. These decisions were the results of lots of good people working hard for a lot of years to end "sewer wars" and to keep it over. While other communities in the United States do collect their payments in a variety of ways, what the article does not highlight is that today, the Milwaukee area is one of the lowest taxed regions for sewer services.

The metropolitan area is better off working together, and who would be served by trying to tear it apart once again -- other than a handful of lawyers and consultants who might stand to make another round of millions off of such a dispute?

Asbjornson, Karen

From: Halbur, Jennifer
Sent: Wednesday, October 01, 2003 4:51 PM
To: Asbjornson, Karen
Subject: FW: MMSD federal lawsuit

Since I haven't been through all of my e-mails yet, I am not sure if this was sent to everyone.

-----Original Message-----

From: eCommunications [mailto:eCommunications@mmsd.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 01, 2003 4:09 PM
Subject: MMSD federal lawsuit

Federal Judge Charles Clevert just released his written judgment that dismisses a lawsuit filed against MMSD by Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers and the Lake Michigan Federation. You can read the decision by clicking on the following link, which can be found on the District's Web site:
<http://www.mmsd.com/pdf/MMSDDecisionandOrder.pdf>

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bgraffin@mmsd.com

New in-house lobbyist in MMSD budget

Sewer bills expected to stay level under spending plan

By STEVE SCHULTZE
 sschultze@journal Sentinel.com

The sewerage district would get its own in-house lobbyist and a handful of new project managers, in a \$58.2 million operations budget made public Monday.

The 1.3% increase in the operations budget would be offset for many residential customers by a slight reduction in next year's property tax levy for sewer construction projects, according to Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District officials.

The district's overall spending for next year — for capital projects as well as operations — would total \$324.3 million, or 7.6% more than this year. Nonetheless, next year's residential sewer bills, on average, would be about the same as this year's, thanks in part to use of surplus money and additional borrowing.

"In effect, our revenue streams are frozen," said

MMSD Budget Manager Steve Kreklow.

Homeowners pay for sewers two ways: as part of property tax bills, and through quarterly sewer and water bills, in which municipal fees are also included.

The new MMSD lobbyist would be paid about \$72,000 a year and would help coordinate the district's extensive lobbying efforts in Madison and Washington, D.C., Kreklow said.

The district now hires outside lobbyists, who also do some public relations work. Those services cost the district \$192,569 last year.

Most of the district's outside lobbying has been done by Broydick and Associates, a firm headed by former Milwaukee lawmaker Bill Broydick.

The decision to hire an in-house lobbyist was done to better coordinate lobbying efforts but might also save some money, Kreklow said.

MMSD uses lobbyists to help secure federal and state money. And the district has pressed state officials for legislation that would allow it to circumvent competitive bidding on sewer projects.

The district operations budget calls for laying off four employees next year, including three managers and one custodian. The management employees being given pink slips, and their salaries, are: communications specialist Todd Bragstad, \$66,646; facilities supervisor Nancy Plichta, \$64,535; and human resources analyst Teresa Figures, \$57,361.

The 2004 budget also would eliminate three key jobs with

yearly salaries totaling \$118,433 that have been vacant since the resignations late last year of Mark Kass, Sylvan Leabman and Floyd DeBow.

Kass was MMSD spokesman and headed the MMSD lobbying effort; Leabman was operations manager; and DeBow headed the district's human resources department. Their duties have been rolled into other employees' jobs as part of a reorganization.

The five new MMSD project managers will be paid \$48,000 to \$77,000 a year. They are being added to better manage sewer projects that have been overseen by contractors, Kreklow said.

The net effect of the new jobs and layoffs would be an increase of one position to a total of 230.5 positions.

According to MMSD, the average Milwaukee household

would pay \$74 next year in MMSD user charges, though the figure varies by household and is tied to water use.

The MMSD property tax would come to about \$160 on a home valued at \$100,000, that charge goes up with the value of a home and is in addition to the user fee.

The biggest spending item in the proposed operations budget is a \$28.5 million payment to United Water Service, the private contractor that operates the district's treatment plants and deep tunnel system.

At the first of three public hearings on the MMSD operations budget Monday, only one person — mayoral candidate Vince Bobot — spoke. He objected to the budget increase, saying the public was demanding a freeze on taxes.

The other budget hearings will be Oct. 13 at 6 p.m. and Oct. 20 at 9 a.m., both at MMSD headquarters, 260 W. Seeboth St.

By Andrew G. Wright and Mary Buckner Powers

Old Pipes, Big Need, Little Money

Cities Have Sticker Shock

Growing funding gap drives search for innovative solutions

The nation's wastewater treatment infrastructure is in sorry shape. Population growth and development have overwhelmed expansion of collection systems across much of the U.S. Maintenance often has lagged as many cities still rely on pipes that were put in the ground over a century ago.

Over a third of Newark, N.J.'s 170-mile collection system is brick. Alexandria, Va.'s sewer network even has a few feet of wooden pipe underlying its historic Old Town section. The two are not too different from aging systems in many other cities that are prone to leaks and spills.

A 2002 federal report estimated that 1.2 trillion gallons of overflows occur each year from combined stormwater and sanitary sewers. Inflow and infiltra-

tion is also a huge problem. "We estimate that our I/I may run as high as 45%," says Emily Baker, Alexandria's city engineer.

There are about 16,000 publicly owned treatment plants in the U.S. Like the aging sewer systems that feed them, many have been chronically underfunded and are now wearing out. "In many places, the local politicians won't step up," says Rob Pennington, an engineer in the Edison, N.J., office of consulting engineer Camp Dresser & McKee Inc. "They're feeling strapped, probably running a deficit, with no prospect of help from Washington or their state capital. Problems are out of sight, either at the treatment plant or buried underground. To raise rates with a big capital program is viewed as a sure way for a politician to have an out-of-office experience."

Fixing or replacing pipes is the next step in cleansing the nation's water and follows the early success of the construction grants program included in 1972's Federal Water Pollution Control Act. The grant program funded a massive building of wastewater plants that treated flows to secondary standards. But cities and states are now on their own and the country seems stuck in a holding pattern. A 2002 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency analysis of water and wastewater treatment needs noted that wastewater treatment efficiencies are leveling off.



▲ **Vintage.** Like other cities, Seattle's water pipes and sewer system are showing their age.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEATTLE PUBLIC UTILITIES

PHOTO COURTESY OF AWWA

says AMSA Executive Director Ken Kirk. AMSA is trying to garner support for dedicated funding, similar to the highway trust fund that uses a tax on fuels to pay for federal highway system improvements. Kirk doubts the Bush administration will consider new taxes in any form. Still, "we believe that some sort of a dedicated fund is an idea with merit," he says.

EPA's 2002 needs assessment supports his argument. The country needs to invest between \$331 billion and \$450 billion on wastewater treatment infrastructure by 2019, according to the study. Operation and maintenance needs are not included but the O&M gap adds between \$72 billion and \$229 billion.

A similar report issued last November by the Congressional Budget Office puts the annual shortfall for wastewater treatment at \$20.9 billion per year. Annual O&M needs range between \$20.3 billion and \$25.2 billion.

Without an infusion of cash from

somewhere, EPA fears a reversal of "hard-won water quality gains. By 2016 pollution levels could be similar to levels observed in the mid-1970s," the report notes.

Few expect much assistance from Washington, however. Near-term financial projections for the federal deficit are bleak. Municipal officials know that federal assistance of the kind that supported the big capital programs of the 1970s and 1980s won't happen. "We're on our own," says Chuck Clarke, Seattle Public Utilities executive director. "It's pretty much us and our ratepayers."

But some cities are reporting significant progress on programs that began more than a decade ago. Newark's trunk lines date to the 19th Century and provide about a third of the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission Plant's 330-million-gal-per-day average flow. "We knew



Engineers have to plead their case. If all the work on the table right now needs to be funded locally, it will never happen.

— WILLIAM HOWARD, CDM

[around] 1990 that we'd have to spend about \$50 million to bring the system up to current standards," says John George, Newark Water and Sewer's program manager. Residents could not afford to finance that large of a program at once.

Anchored by a \$44.3-million EPA grant, the city cobbled together funding from phased rate hikes, bonds and low-interest state loans. New Jersey lawmakers holding key positions on federal public works committees at the time assisted in landing the grant. "Their political stars were properly aligned," says Richard D. Fox, CDM president. "When that happens, you have to take advantage."

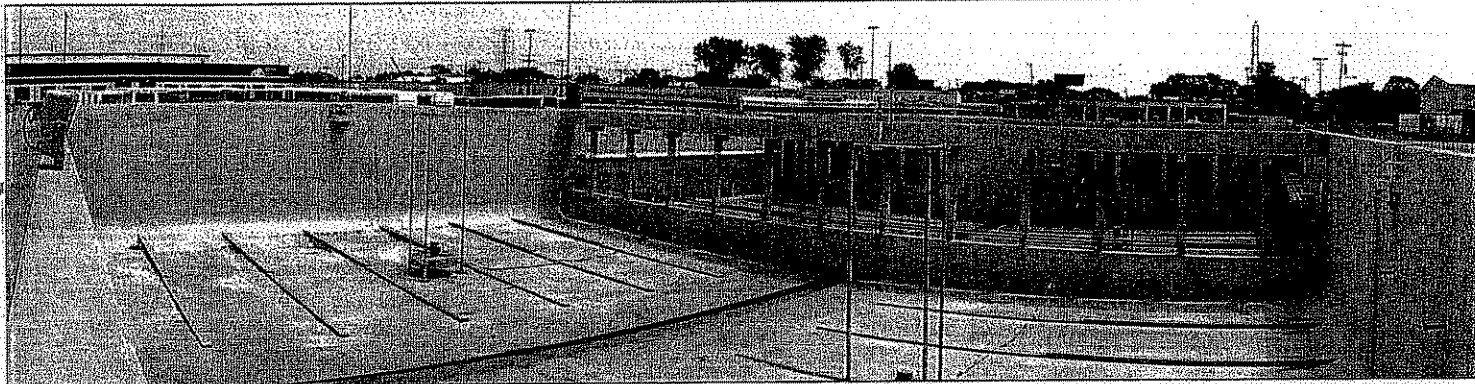
The program, broken into five phas-

The AMSA Index

EPA REGION	NUMBER OF AMSA AGENCIES REPORTING IN 2002	2002 POPULATION SERVED	AMSA INDEX (BASE YEAR 1985 = 100) AND YEAR TO YEAR PERCENT CHANGE IN RED																		
			1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	
1	10	3,581,675	66.2	78.1	95.9	103.6	109.6	162.8	189.8	219.1	297.0	298.8	296.1	313.0	302.8	307.2	308.6	305.2	302.6	309.4	
			14.6	22.4	8.9	34.7	20.0	6.6	15.5	30.7	-4.0	-0.8	1.8	-0.4	-1.6	0.4	0.1	-1.5	-1.9		
2	16	12,974,113	83.4	87.5	97.9	107.5	124.2	143.5	162.8	190.7	192.0	217.2	210.1	201.5	203.2	209.5	217.2	216.8	243.1	262.4	
			4.9	4.9	9.8	15.6	15.6	13.4	16.9	1.4	5.0	0.9	4.4	1.2	3.0	1.5	1.8	2.3	5.1		
3	22	11,608,973	118.8	134.4	136.2	139.7	148.1	150.8	181.1	183.9	203.5	208.2	208.1	217.1	217.4	222.8	224.2	231.3	237.7	237.1	
			13.1	14	2.7	6.0	1.8	20.0	2.9	0.6	2.2	1.3	4.3	0.1	1.7	0.8	-0.1	2.7	-0.2		
4	37	11,445,427	134.4	140.6	149.0	143.5	151.9	159.5	167.0	173.8	185.1	198.9	210.2	218.7	229.6	228.1	234.3	243.9	251.9	250.5	
			5.1	6.0	2.5	-5.8	5.0	3.7	4.1	7.4	8.8	4.6	4.0	6.0	1.5	2.7	3.2	4.5	2.0		
5	40	19,079,786	148.4	145.7	142.5	144.8	139.2	141.4	143.7	162.7	157.4	171.1	178.0	179.1	179.4	179.8	184.9	189.9	192.2	203.0	
			-0.5	-2.2	-1.6	-3.6	-1.6	5.1	9.4	-3.7	2.2	1.6	2.2	-0.3	-0.5	2.5	2.9	0.8	6.7		
6	17	10,532,253	103.5	118.5	139.0	151.5	159.7	171.9	164.7	167.1	182.9	187.1	201.9	207.1	206.0	203.7	202.1	207.2	207.5	213.9	
			14.6	17.3	8.8	5.4	7.6	-4.2	1.1	9.8	2.3	7.9	2.0	-0.6	-1.1	-0.6	2.5	0.3	1.5		
7	14	4,538,293	62.2	67.0	69.4	70.7	72.6	72.0	80.6	91.4	129.1	138.3	139.0	141.5	149.9	156.8	159.3	160.0	166.5	171.1	
			7.7	3.5	1.9	2.6	-0.9	12.0	9.8	41.9	10.3	2.8	1.8	6.0	4.6	2.5	-3.0	-4.0	3.1		
8	10	2,931,382	99.4	99.5	99.7	106.2	103.1	112.6	117.6	123.0	134.6	133.0	142.5	140.5	140.2	141.9	147.1	147.7	151.9	150.6	
			0.1	0.2	6.5	-3.0	9.3	4.4	4.6	6.5	2.8	6.1	0.1	-0.3	0.5	3.7	0.4	2.1	-0.8		
9	34	25,928,063	61.6	66.4	71.6	83.1	98.0	112.0	128.6	144.8	158.6	169.1	171.7	178.9	182.8	191.9	187.0	197.2	201.7	209.6	
			7.7	7.9	15.7	17.1	14.1	14.8	12.4	9.6	6.6	1.5	4.2	2.2	5.0	-2.3	6.0	2.1	3.7		
10	17	3,994,698	112.6	121.8	125.3	135.7	145.9	154.8	169.5	189.5	196.0	219.5	238.8	252.5	268.9	266.3	270.9	290.5	298.6	330.8	
			8.2	3.7	7.4	8.2	5.4	9.5	11.8	2.7	12.4	9.2	5.3	2.5	2.9	1.9	7.2	2.6	10.2		
Total	217	106,614,663																			
Annual Service Charge Index			100.0	105.8	111.6	118.6	127.5	137.6	150.5	164.7	179.6	189.1	193.6	197.5	200.2	203.9	205.9	212.4	219.5	227.4	
Year-to-Year Percent Change				5.8	5.5	6.6	7.3	8.0	9.2	9.5	7.6	4.8	2.3	3.5	1.7	2.3	0.7	3.1	2.2	3.6	
Change in Consumer Price Index in Percent				1.9	3.6	4.1	4.8	5.4	4.2	3.0	3.0	2.6	2.8	3.0	2.3	1.6	2.7	3.4	2.6	1.6	

Note: The value of the annual Service Charge Index is based on all responses received. The annual percent change in the Service Charge Index is based on the responses of those agencies that responded in both the previous year and the current year.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CDM



▲ **Vaulting Ahead.** Nashville detention chamber helped restore 33 miles of Cumberland River.

creased in five years and were not projected to increase. The capacity of the largest plant was doubled from 60 mgd to 120 mgd. "But it has never seen more than 40 mgd and that was in 1997," says Martin.

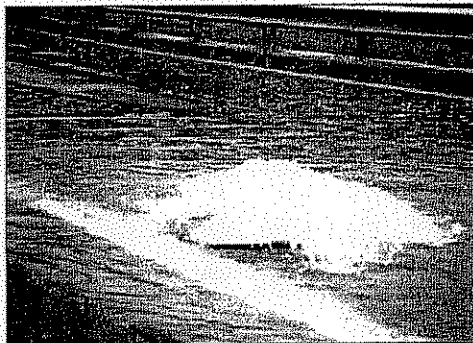
Auditors found that the county did not review other technologies for cost-efficient alternatives. Contractor prequalification methods increased costs unnecessarily and ineffective cost and schedule controls pushed costs upward. "There is no such thing as no surprises in construction, but they could have had a better handle on the order of magnitude," says Martin.

The report recommended the county hire an experienced program manager because the environmental department went from a \$25-million-a-year agency to a \$250-million-a-year agency. "It's a monumental task. They've done some things right. It's hard to know what you're not doing if you don't have the tools to do it," says Martin.

Complicated public works projects benefit from the hiring of outside program managers, say many in the industry. "What a program manager brings to the table is the ability to focus resources on the problem, manage the risks and make sure the product is delivered," says Skip Holland, managing executive for program management at MWH, Broomfield, Colo.

MWH is program manager for Atlanta's \$3-billion sewerage program. The job is driven by two consent decrees, one

for combined sewer overflows and the other for sanitary system overflows. Some 15% of the city's sewers serving 19 square miles of downtown Atlanta are combined. The city now is building an 8.5-mile-long, 24-ft-dia tunnel designed to hold 150 million gallons of overflow. Flows would be pumped to a treatment plant when capacity becomes available.



Nationwide, sewer systems spill about 1.2 trillion gallons every year.

The city considered building another tunnel but value engineering determined that a storage tank near the treatment plant would be enough, says Rob Hunter, deputy commissioner for watershed management. The city has completed 10 short-term SSO projects, including an 8-mile-long, 16-ft-dia holding tunnel in the northern part of the city, but now it is evaluating the system to determine the next step.

Unlike Birmingham, Atlanta must add new capacity to accommodate its ram-

panant growth. New capacity is not included in the decree, but is part of the total upgrade. "In rough terms, \$1 billion is for SSO, \$1 billion is for CSO and \$1 billion is tied to other regulations," says Hunter.

The problem facing both cities is how to pay for \$3-billion systems. While Birmingham's rates could double, Atlanta's rates could triple, with the heaviest burden falling on its poorest citizens.

Mayor Shirley Franklin (D) asked Fulton County to put a local option sales tax on the ballot to help fund the projects, but county officials refused.

Both communities are facing rate hikes that are unaffordable, says Eric Rothstein, senior economist with Denver-based CH2M Hill Cos., a part of Atlanta's program management team. Within five years, low-income residents could face sewer and water bills that are 6 to 8% of their disposable income, far above EPA's 2% threshold. Both municipalities need legislation that will allow them to spread the burden over a larger rate base, says Rothstein.

Even that might not be enough. For years engineers have been content to act as silent partners for their municipal clients, says William Howard, chief technology officer for CDM and incoming chair of the American Council of Engineering Companies. For their own sake and for the public good, they must assume a more active role, he says.

"Engineers have to plead their case to the public and to Washington," he says. "If all the work on the table needs to be funded locally, it will never happen." ■

Immediate Release

October 14, 2003

Contact: Bill Graffin, Public Information Manager, (414) 225-2077

MMSD Commission set for final vote on no-increase budget for 2004

(Milwaukee, WI) – The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD)

Commission is scheduled to vote this coming Monday on an overall budget that costs taxpayers and customers the same in 2004 as it did in 2003.

“This is an overall tax freeze that still allows us to fully fund our legally required sewer improvement projects, as well as our overflow reduction plan,” said Dennis Grzezinski, MMSD commission chairman. “If approved, this move will help taxpayers and water quality.”

On Monday, commissioners will be voting on the District’s 2004 operations and maintenance budget, which is expected to increase 1.3%, or \$556,000 for 2004. The operations and maintenance budget is funded through user charges that are typically included as part of quarterly municipal water bills.

The District also has a capital budget, which is funded with property taxes. In September 2003, the MMSD Commission voted to make deeper cuts in the District’s 2004 capital budget levy to offset the expected \$556,000 increase in the operations and maintenance budget.

“Due to contractual obligations with our private contractor United Water Services Inc., we could not avoid an increase in the operations and maintenance budget,” said Grzezinski. “However, despite skyrocketing healthcare costs everywhere, District staff did an excellent job reining in MMSD healthcare costs, saving money and giving us the opportunity to pass along some tax relief.”

District healthcare cost savings include:

- 50% reduction in costs for a new healthcare plan administrator.
- Sizeable discounts for using generic prescription drugs.
- An increase in employee prescription drug co-payments and fees for emergency room visits.

The public’s last chance to comment on the operations and maintenance budget is October 20, 2003 at 8:45 a.m. at the MMSD headquarters, 260 West Seeboth Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

MMSD commissioners will vote on the budget at the regularly scheduled commission meeting October 20, 2003, which begins at 9:00 a.m. at the MMSD headquarters.

#####



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Opinion

Consent deals set with DEP to fix region's sewer systems

Wednesday, October 15, 2003

By Don Hopey, Post-Gazette Staff Writer

Twenty-six municipalities and sewage authorities in Allegheny County have received orders from the state to fix combined-sewer systems and eventually reduce storm-triggered discharges of untreated sewage into area creeks and rivers.

Affected communities

Communities and agencies that received consent orders from the state Department of Environmental Protection, requiring sewer system assessments and repairs, were:

- Aspinwall, Braddock, Braddock Hills, Carnegie, Crafton, East Pittsburgh, Emsworth, Etna, Homestead, McDonald, McKees Rocks, Millvale, Munhall, North Braddock, Pitcairn, Rankin, Sharpsburg, Stowe, Swissvale, Turtle Creek, West Homestead, West View, Wilkins, Wilmerding, the McDonald Sewage Authority and the Municipal Authority of West View Borough.

Communities have until Jan. 31 to return the

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**signed documents to
DEP.**

The consent orders and agreements, announced yesterday by the state Department of Environmental Protection, cap almost two years of negotiations. They require the municipalities and sewage authorities to inventory, map, assess and finally repair their sewer systems.

The orders will end up costing between \$100 million and \$200 million and will no doubt mean higher municipal sewer fees.

A combined-sewer system is one that carries both storm water and sanitary waste.

A second phase of the agreements requires the 26 municipalities and authorities to work with the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority and other municipalities to minimize sewage overflows and identify flow controls needed to comply with the federal Clean Water Act.

"When the consent order and agreements were first proposed in 2002, the regulatory agencies drafted measures they believed were necessary to achieve the goal," said Chuck Duritsa, DEP Southwest regional director.

"We listened to the municipal concerns and believe that these agreements reflect significant changes that address those concerns and still allow us all to make a difference in our waterways to protect public health and the environment."

Alcosan and the 83 municipalities and authorities in its service area -- including the 26 with combined-sewer systems -- have known since 1994 that they must reduce the discharge of raw sewage into the region's creeks and rivers.

The discharges, from 279 Alcosan combined-sewer overflows and another 135 municipal pipes in Allegheny County, occur during and following rain storms and foul the rivers with raw sewage for up to 70 days a year.

The estimated cost of limiting those discharges to five to seven days a year is about \$3 billion.

Crafton Councilman Dan Cindric said the borough estimated it would need to spend \$3 million over the next 10 years to comply with the order.

Last October the borough increased its municipal sewer fee, commonly called the local surcharge, from 50 cents for 1,000 gallons of water to \$2 per 1,000 gallons to cover that cost.

The local surcharge is on top of Alcosan's rate of about \$2.30 per 1,000 gallons.

"We educated our ratepayers by putting information in our borough

newsletters prior to the increase and there wasn't much opposition," said Cindric, who is also chairman of the Southern Municipal Basin Group, a group established to reduce sewer costs through cooperative planning.

"Most people understood it is something we have to do to comply with the Clean Water Act and accepted it."

The orders and agreements were negotiated by the DEP, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Allegheny County Health Department.

Similar consent orders covering sanitary sewer overflows are being finalized and will be sent to the other 57 municipalities in Alcosan's service area by the Allegheny County Health Department soon, possibly within the week.

The DEP is also finalizing Pittsburgh's consent order.

The discharges, which were designed into the original system built in the 1950s to prevent the Alcosan treatment facility from getting damaged by flooding, can last up to five days each, and annually dump about 17 million gallons of raw human waste and untreated industrial pollutants into local creeks and rivers.

In spring 1997, the EPA threatened to fine Alcosan and its member communities \$275 million if the sewer overflows, which violate the federal Clean Water Act, continued.

Fines are not a part of the orders announced yesterday, but municipalities that fail to sign the consent orders and agreements could be subjected to fines.

Don Hopey can be reached at dhopey@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1983.

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Sewer bills likely to triple in 5 years

Atlanta council to vote on increases Nov. 19

D.L. Bennett and Stacy Shelton - Staff
Tuesday, October 14, 2003

Atlanta will likely have to triple sewer rates over the next five years to pay for a massive \$3 billion overhaul of its sewerage system.

Consultants say Atlanta needs 45 percent rate increases in 2004 and in 2005, plus 11 percent increases in each of the three following years. On top of the whopping rate increases, they say Atlanta should add a \$1.20 a month surcharge to pay for security measures.

The average residential bill for water and sewer service would jump from about \$60 a month to \$172 after five years. That would make the city's sewer service by far the most expensive in the Atlanta area and perhaps the nation.

Grant Park resident Hugh Sawyer said such massive increases would drive people out of Atlanta. "I am actively making arrangements to leave the city," he said. "I don't see our problems getting fixed. I don't see any hope here."

Sawyer said he employs conservation measures that keep his home's monthly bill about \$40. That low-use rate would jump to \$115 over five years under the city's plan.

"I'm curious, who's going to be able to pay this?" he asked.

Mayor Shirley Franklin will propose the rate increases to the City Council, which she hopes will make a final decision Nov. 19. All five years of increases would be approved at the same time.

Residents and businesses from south Fulton County to Sandy Springs use city water and sewer services. They could see the first rate increase Jan. 1.

Franklin said she is trying to get the federal and state governments to help Atlantans shoulder the financial burden. But to date, she has been unsuccessful.

"These increases are really draconian," the mayor said. "They will put the city at risk of being unaffordable. This is an emergency situation."

Franklin contended such high water and sewer bills could drive businesses out of the city and halt new projects in their tracks. For example, the \$27,000-a-month bill for a downtown hotel would soar to \$77,000 a month after five years.

Mayor to seek voter backing

The mayor will have a news conference today to encourage Atlanta residents, business owners and political leaders to support the quest for federal and state assistance.

She stressed her intentions Monday while celebrating the one-year anniversary of Clean Water Atlanta, her program to fix the city's water and sewer systems.

"I was sure when I heard about the president talking about \$87 billion to

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rebuild Iraq, he was going to include \$1 billion for Atlanta," Franklin said before descending into the \$140 million Nancy Creek sewer tunnel for an inspection tour.

The rate increases suggested by the consulting firm Black & Veatch are based on Atlanta receiving no outside financial assistance to pay for a \$3 billion sewer overhaul. Franklin has asked for \$1 billion in federal funds and \$1 billion in state help.

Much of the work is required by two federal consent decrees that Atlanta signed after government regulators, environmentalists and downstream jurisdictions sued the city because of pollution from leaking pipes. The sewage overflow, especially in heavy rains, has created major pollution problems for towns south of Atlanta along the Chattahoochee River.

Mayor wants expansion

Atlanta's failure to hit some of its targets for repairs has resulted in \$4.1 million in fines. The city has also had to pay nearly \$300,000 in fines to the state since the beginning of 1999 for spills of raw and partially treated sewage.

Sally Bethea, executive director of the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper environmental group, was a plaintiff in the original lawsuit that forced Atlanta to comply with federal clean water guidelines. She said Monday that only about \$1.5 billion or \$1.8 billion of the work is mandated by the consent decrees.

"I still believe this is the worst-case scenario," Bethea said. "We will find [financial] help."

The \$3 billion overhaul, which would add sewers for future growth, goes beyond what the federal government requires. But development is limited across much of the city because of its inability to handle the sewage, which is why the city wants to add capacity.

Franklin said the city could do just the work required by the federal government. However, any program that doesn't expand the sewer network would be "shortsighted," she said.

Lobbying to council begins

The Franklin administration plans to make a case for the rate increases to the City Council in a retreat Thursday and to the council's Utilities Committee today. Eight votes are needed on the 15-member council to adopt the rate increases.

There have already been increases in city property taxes and garbage fees, and a new tax for dealing with storm water is planned. And the higher sewer rates don't account for about \$800 million in water pipe improvements.

"If this is not the story of the year, I don't know what is," said Councilman Howard Shook, vice chairman of the Utilities Committee. "It's stupefying. It begs a ton of questions."

Councilman C.T. Martin said the rate increase will be a tough sell. "Some people will understand," he said. "Some will not. It's time for us to fish or cut bait."

If the mayor can't get the council to OK the higher rates, the city won't be able to fund the sewer program.

State and federal officials have declined to say what they will do if the city

balks. But in the past, the federal government has hit Atlanta with huge fines for failing to fix its sewers. Federal lawyers could return to court to force the city to comply.

Environmentalists have dogged the project for years to force the city to separate the 330 miles of pipes downtown that carry both storm water and sewage.

Atlanta's plan calls for separating less than a third of those pipes and for building deep tunnels to handle the spillover.

"The plan is still a bad plan no matter how it's funded," said activist Steve Carr.

Desperate downstream

The price of clean water is going up for everyone in metro Atlanta's 16-county water district. Officials estimate it will cost at least \$40 billion over the next 30 years to add sewage capacity for at least 2 million more people.

And that doesn't solve the Chattahoochee's biggest problem: dirty rainwater. The water district estimates it will cost an additional \$20 billion over 30 years to store and clean up the grease and grime in the rainwater that washes over streets, parking lots and lawns.

Downstream users say they are already paying a price.

Pete Frost, executive director of the Douglasville-Douglas County Water and Sewer Authority, said the Chattahoochee is so polluted the authority has never been able to withdraw drinking water from it.

"We happen to be immediately downstream from the city of Atlanta and some of the other large dischargers, and because of that, the poorest water quality in the Chattahoochee is right now along the Douglas County borders," Frost said.

Last year, Mayor Franklin took her message to the Rotary Club in LaGrange, a city along West Point Lake, the collection point for Atlanta's sewage.

Although conditions have gotten significantly better as Atlanta makes sewer repairs, the lake still sometimes suffers from algae blooms and raw sewage washing up along its banks. It's not always Atlanta's fault, but the finger-pointing usually starts there.

Franklin told the Rotarians she is committed to fixing the problems so West Point would no longer have to deal with the aftermath.

"Every person I've talked to about that speech says we have a friend in the mayor's office in Atlanta," said Art Holbrook, a retired dentist who lobbies for West Point Lake.

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Immediate Release

October 20, 2003

Contact: Bill Graffin, Public Information Manager, (414) 225-2077

MMSD Commission approves no-increase budget for 2004

(Milwaukee, WI) – The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD)

Commission today gave final approval for an overall 2004 budget that will cost taxpayers the same amount of money next year as it did in 2003.

“This is essentially a tax freeze, which benefits our customer’s wallets and water quality,” said Dennis Grzezinski, MMSD commission chairman. “The overall budget is economically responsible and still funds the legally required sewer improvement projects in our overflow reduction plan.”

Commissioners approved a \$58,155,000 operations and maintenance budget this morning, 1.3% higher than the 2003 operations and maintenance budget, or \$556,000.

MMSD’s operations and maintenance budget is funded through user charges that are typically included as part of quarterly municipal water bills.

The District also collects property taxes to fund its capital budget.

Commissioners approved a reduced 2004 capital budget of \$266,000,000 in September of this year that offset the \$556,000 increase in the operations and maintenance budget.

In 2004, most customers will receive MMSD services, both wastewater treatment and flood management, for less than one dollar a day. A breakdown comparing rates for 2003 and 2004 is included below. The charges are calculated for a typical \$150,000 home in the District.

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>Difference</u>
<u>Capital budget charge</u>	\$255.00	\$238.50	- \$16.50
<u>User charge</u>	\$77.61	\$78.49	\$0.88
Totals	\$332.61	\$316.99	- \$15.62

Despite skyrocketing healthcare costs, MMSD's 2004 anticipated user charge billings are \$3.3 million higher than they were in 1986. That's only about an eight percent increase in 18 years.

The 2004 capital budget includes continued funding for an expansion of the Deep Tunnel. A 7.1-mile long Northwest Side Relief Sewer is currently under construction and will add another 88 million gallons of wastewater storage. The Deep Tunnel holds a capacity of 405 million gallons.

Treatment plant improvements and significant upgrades to MMSD's sewer system are also included in the 2004 capital budget. Funding is included for a flood management project in Wauwatosa's Hart Park. The budget also includes money for the District's long range planning effort called the Water Quality Initiative (WQI). Using a watershed approach, the WQI will identify and examine all sources of water pollution within a watershed to determine where it makes the most sense to spend limited tax dollars on protecting and improving our rivers and lakes.

Original URL: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/metro/oct03/178797.asp>

MMSD to set nets to catch condoms

\$2 million project will be a short-term fix

By STEVE SCHULTZE and MARIE ROHDE
sschultze@journalsentinel.com

Last Updated: Oct. 21, 2003

The sewerage district Monday put on the fast track a never-before-tried \$2 million system to filter used condoms from discharges at the Jones Island plant - a system that will soon become largely redundant.

The \$2 million project would be a short-term fix and begin operating in mid-2004. A year later, the district will spend \$13 million to replace 20-year-old screens and other equipment that has failed at the "headworks," or sewage intake system at the front of the Jones Island plant.

Milwaukee sewerage commissioners advanced the preliminary fix Monday, voting unanimously to move quickly on authorizing what is expected to be a \$1.5 million system of nets to capture condoms in chlorine tanks at Jones Island. Other costs connected with the unique condom net system include nearly \$100,000 a year for maintenance and additional costs of engineering design work.

But the upcoming \$13 million upgrade will make the \$2 million condom filters unnecessary, except in extra-heavy rainstorms when high sewage flows are diverted from the first two of three stages of treatment, said Kevin Shafer, MMSD's executive director.

In those instances, the district combines partially treated sewage with fully treated sewage before discharging the mix into the lake. MMSD considers that controversial process, which it calls blending, better than simply dumping raw sewage.

Quick solution sought

The condom catchers were seized upon as a quick solution after Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager threatened to prosecute MMSD for failing to prevent condoms from getting into the lake.

The issue came to light in spring when a fisherman reported seeing what he called a "slick" of hundreds of used condoms floating in Lake Michigan.

The net solution was chosen because other systems at the treatment plant aren't adequately stopping condoms, which are notoriously difficult objects for sewage plants to capture, said Chuck Burney, a state Department of Natural Resources official who oversees MMSD.

Generally, condoms are screened at the plant's headworks or removed from giant sewage clarifier tanks, Burney said.

But those systems failed, said Dennis Grzezinski, MMSD Commission chairman.

"Clearly, some things have come through the plant," Grzezinski said Monday. "Because (spent condoms) neither sink nor float, the physical processes in the plant one would hope would take care of them didn't."

He said that manually removing condoms at the plant and from the harbor would be too expensive. MMSD is now paying an average of \$460 a day for one worker to scoop spent condoms from the surface of tanks at Jones Island.

Plan questioned

One critic suggested manual removal of any condoms that escape the plant would make more sense than spending the \$2 million on the novel filtering system.

"That's a lot of money," said Richard Wanta, executive director of Wisconsin Underground Contractors Association. "What was wrong with the

old.system?"

Since spring, MMSD has had workers with long-handled nets scoop condoms that bubble to the surface at the plant. The district also sends crews out in the Milwaukee harbor to scoop any prophylactics discharged into the lake.

The \$2 million would be better spent on sewer upgrade projects than on creating the novel plant filtering system, Wanta said.

No condoms have been found to have escaped from the South Shore Treatment Plant, where a finer screen than the one at Jones Island was installed in its headworks two years ago, said Shafer.

Shafer said that even when the new screening system is installed at Jones Island, it's possible that won't solve the problem. Despite efforts to study the entire Jones Island complex, MMSD and its consultants still have not figured out where the spent condoms are coming from.

And some condoms may be washing into the lake from local streets and storm sewers, Shafer said.

The MMSD Commission Monday also approved its \$58.2 million operations and maintenance budget for 2004, a 1.3% increase over this year's. When combined with the already approved capital projects budget, the overall MMSD budget for next year is \$324.3 million, or 7.6% more than this year's.

From the Oct. 21, 2003 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

**Milwaukee Metropolitan
Sewerage District**

Legislative Audit Bureau
November 2003

1

Overview

- ◆ Serves 28 communities, including the City of Milwaukee, 17 other communities within Milwaukee County, and 10 communities outside the county
- ◆ Commission consists of 11 members, 7 appointed by the Milwaukee Mayor and 4 by Milwaukee County suburban communities

2

Sewerage System

- ◆ MMSD has spent \$2.3 billion on sewer improvements, including the Deep Tunnel
- ◆ Sewage is conveyed to one of two treatment plants or stored temporarily in the Deep Tunnel

3

Overflow Reduction Expectations

- ◆ Deep Tunnel was expected to:
 - virtually eliminate sanitary sewer overflows; and
 - reduce combined sewer overflows to an average of 1.4 annually
- ◆ From 1994 through 2001 there was an average of:
 - 4.9 sanitary sewer overflows annually; and
 - 3.0 combined sewer overflows annually

4

Factors Contributing to Overflows

- ◆ 5 very large storms
- ◆ Water inflow and infiltration (a 17 percent increase since 1980)
- ◆ Capacity problem caused by siphons that convey wastewater to treatment plant
- ◆ Sediment deposits in the Deep Tunnel
- ◆ Operational policies and strategies adopted by the MMSD and its contractor

5

Reducing Future Overflows

- ◆ MMSD will spend \$786 million to increase system capacity and efficiency
- ◆ MMSD will implement projects and procedures to limit inflow and infiltration of stormwater entering the District's system

6

MMSD Compliance

- ◆ Since 1994, MMSD has not violated permit requirements related to combined sewer overflows
- ◆ MMSD maintains that all sanitary overflows were unavoidable and therefore allowable under the terms of its permit
- ◆ In 2002, DNR and MMSD entered into a stipulated settlement of a lawsuit alleging permit violations

7

Post-Evaluation Developments

- ◆ DNR issued MMSD its new permit on April 1, 2003
- ◆ Questions have arisen regarding whether overflow volume has been understated
- ◆ A construction related sanitary sewer overflow of 250,000 gallons occurred in July 2003
- ◆ \$2 million system underway to catch condoms after many found in Lake Michigan

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