

Board Byline — Spring Season is Investment Season: We All Invest in Our Community

By Susan Keil, Board Chair

Every season is investment season at Oak Lodge Water Services (OLWS), including spring. Just like investing in your yard or garden, infrastructure investments in OLWS support the health of the local watershed and lasting quality of our wastewater collection, treatment, and potable water distribution systems. This season OLWS continues to make progress on current projects, which include the **Tertiary Treatment Project** and the **Inflow and Infiltration Reduction Project (I&I Program)**.

Our wastewater plant treats and cleans an average of 1.5 billion gallons of wastewater annually, adding cool clean water back into the Willamette River. The **Tertiary Treatment Project** at the Wastewater Treatment Plant helps OLWS meet new, more stringent permit requirements for treated water, called effluent. Tertiary treatment acts as a third level of treatment for the effluent, making the wastewater cleaning process even more effective at removing bacteria, viruses, and inorganic materials. To meet new requirements, OLWS must construct a tertiary treatment facility.

The **I&I Program** replaces faulty pipes in our wastewater collection system. Faulty pipes allow surface and ground water to enter the pipelines, particularly during strong storm events. The unwanted surface and ground water lead to the collection system being at full capacity and can result in sanitary sewer overflows.

Together, these projects help our wastewater system perform to current state and federal environmental standards.

Updating our infrastructure under current plans helps OLWS avoid more expensive repairs when emergencies occur. Upgrades are prioritized based on their urgency and benefit to the system, and are planned for the next 5-10 years. Addressing vulnerabilities allows OLWS to handle the intensifying storm events caused by climate shifts, to meet more stringent regulations, to reduce the risk of future sanitary sewer overflows, and to promote healthy local waterways.

How does this affect my rates? The OLWS Budget Committee will meet in April 2024 on the 2nd, 4th, and 9th to discuss the budget for the coming year, which begins July 1, 2024. The Budget Committee is a group of volunteers who are also OLWS customers. The OLWS Board of Directors will meet on May 21, 2024, to adopt the budget with a proposed rate. The Public Hearing for the proposed rate will take place on June 18, 2024. This process will determine the rate that will be required in the upcoming fiscal year to support the important capital improvements outlined above as well as operational expenses.

Learn more! This is a large and important community investment; OLWS values your input. Below are Board meetings where you can provide public comment about the planned improvements to the wastewater treatment plant and collections system. You're welcome to attend through Zoom video conference or in-person (14496 SE River Road, Oak Grove, OR 97267). The upcoming regular meetings will be held at 6:00 p.m. on:

Tuesday, March 19 | **Tuesday, April 16** | **Tuesday, May 21**

You can find more details about meeting locations and times at OakLodgeWaterServices.org. Additionally, the OLWS Wastewater Master Plan offers a technical description of the needed capital improvements projects; you can view that at OakLodgeWaterServices.org.

Scan Me! Have you seen our yard signs around town at construction sites? When you do, scan the QR code on them.

Storm drain Cleaning Assistance Program (SCAP)

OLWS coordinates this discount program to assist area businesses. Storm drains require regular cleaning to remove pollutants and prevent flooding. The discounted flat fee of \$60 covers removal of debris from standard parking lot drains. Registration is open March 1- April 30 at OakLodgeWaterServices.org/SCAP



Outdoor Actions for Spring Water Protection

Is your garden waking up to spring? Reminders to protect our watershed with these helpful actions:

- Pull out debris from drainage ways and catch basins. Never put clippings down the catch basins—nutrients from greens can harm water quality.
- Remove weeds using tools instead of chemicals. To fight weeds, either overseed with grass seed, or add cornmeal, as it acts as a natural pre-emergent.
- Compost kitchen scraps, grass clippings and yard debris then add it to your soil. Compost is rich in nutrients that plants need. Using compost minimizes the need for additional fertilizers.
- Choose natives plants to conserve water in your garden. Natives also require less fertilizer.
- Dispose of pet waste in the garbage can. This keeps harmful bacteria out of the downstream water cycle.

Also, please contact OLWS if you are starting a large digging project, or a yard project near a creek. Our staff will help you determine if you need a permit to protect the waterway from erosion caused by soil disturbance.

All of our actions impact the health of our watershed. A few small changes on your part make a big difference!

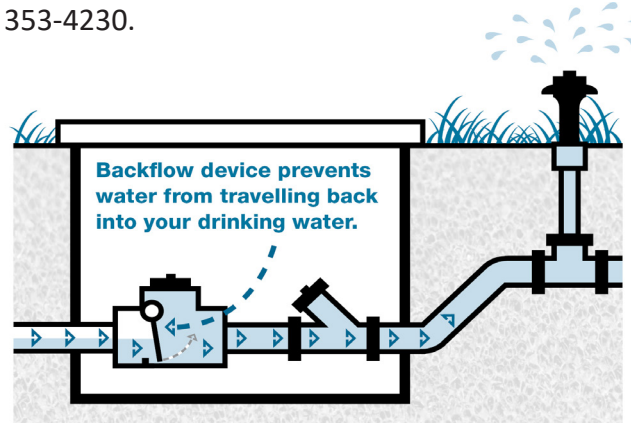
National Prescription Drug Take Back Day

Take your used, unwanted, and/or expired prescription medicine from your cabinets to have them properly disposed of at a local site. Check the OLWS website for more information on local disposal sites. This is a no-questions-asked opportunity for drugs to be properly turned in and safely destroyed via incineration. Illegal drugs are NOT accepted.

Backflow Testing Information

For the health and safety of your family and our community — test your backflow this spring. **Please note, not everyone has or needs a backflow device.** Some reasons why you may need a backflow device include irrigation systems, swimming pools, hot tubs, boiler systems, or being on a well.

The Oregon Health Authority and OLWS require annual backflow testing to maintain clean and safe drinking water. For your convenience OLWS has a Backflow Prevention Assembly Testing Program. To find out more information visit the Backflow Testing webpage, or contact Dave Seifert at dave.seifert@olws.org or by calling (503) 353-4230.



Emergency Contact Information

Our team is available 24 hours a day at (503) 654-7765. If you see water gushing up out of either the street, ground, or from a manhole, please call us. Use the same number if you notice sewer spills or if you see someone illegally dumping into a storm drain.



Follow us on Facebook and Twitter
[@OakLodgeWater](https://www.facebook.com/OakLodgeWater) for news and updates.