# Moose Lake-Windemere Area Sanitary Sewer District

[www.mlwssd.org](http://www.mlwssd.org)

NEWSLETTER

October 2012

Message from the Sewer District

Hope you are enjoying these beautiful fall temperatures. It wasn’t that long ago the area was dealing with the flooding in Moose Lake and Carlton County areas. But I must say the entire community came together to help each other out with numerous relief efforts. To ensure every effort was made to keep the sewer system operating and preventing backups during the flooding the Sewer District as well as the City of Moose Lake became members of MnWARN.

MnWARN is a formal emergency response program in Minnesota which is a mutual aid agreement to provide a program whereby water, wastewater, and storm water utilities sustaining physical damage from natural or man-made disasters can obtain emergency assistance, in the form of personnel, equipment, and materials and other associated services necessary to protect the health and welfare of the utilities customers. The District was able to obtain assistance from the City of St. Frances in the form of extra pumps and manpower to help monitor the system around the clock during the flooding. Included in this edition of the newsletter is a summary of Superintendent Keith Newman’s recount of the events of the flood and how the Sewer District and the City of Moose Lake worked together during the flooding. On behalf of the Sewer District Board I would like to personally thank Superintendent Keith Newman and the City of Moose Lake for all the efforts that went into managing the systems during the flooding event.

On another note, sewer rates will be increasing on January 1, 2013 from $48 per unit to $54 per unit. Why so many increases in the user rate over the past several years? Glad you asked. The District held low rates for many years as the Board members chose to use the reserve funds on hand rather than raise the user fees. Based on recommendations from our auditor as well as financial consultants, the District has been slowly increasing the rates over the past several years to bring them in line with a user rate that supports the system. The sewer system was installed back in the early ‘80’s and the District has been making many improvements to the systems by upgrading lift stations, raising manholes, lining sections of pipe, etc. The District is continuing to move forward proactively by televising and cleaning the sewer pipes to ensure your system operates smoothly.

Please feel free to contact our office at (218) 485-8276, or by email at [mlwssd@mchsi.com](mailto:mlwssd@mchsi.com) if you have any questions regarding your sewer district.

Sincerely,

Darla Hall, Executive Director

**NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS**

**If you would like to receive your newsletter via email rather than by mail, please send your email information and full name to** [**mlwssd@mchsi.com**](mailto:mlwssd@mchsi.com)**.**

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***Winterizing Your Septic System and Cabin***

As fall is in full swing in Minnesota and we enjoy the glorious weather we must remember winter will be here in no time. Below are a few tips that can help you save energy and prevent costly problems.

* Septic System Maintenance

Keeping your cabin system working properly avoids the risk of it leaking and possibly contaminating groundwater. To help prevent septic systems from freezing, spread a layer of straw or leaves over the system to provide insulation. Pumping of the septic tank regularly is an important task. How frequently depends on how often the cabin is used and by how many people. Check with your local septic pumper for further details and suggestions.

* Winterizing Plumbing

For those who use the cabin periodically throughout the winter months, set the thermostat at 50 degrees and open the doors of cabinets that have pipes in them. Another option is insulating or wrapping the pipes with heat tape to prevent freezing. If you have never winterized plumbing before you may want to hire professional assistance to ensure the job is done correctly. If you are closing the cabin completely for the winter, you can shut off the water and winterize the plumbing. Be sure and bleed the pipes and water heater lines completely and use recreational vehicle antifreeze, which is rated for potable water lines and is not toxic like regular antifreeze.

* Furnace Tips

If you don’t plan on using your cabin during the winter months and are winterizing the plumbing, you can turn the furnace off. Some things homeowners can do themselves include vacuuming the furnace interior, changing the air filter and checking any belts for wear. Call a reputable repair service for more in-depth maintenance. Keep in mind that a clean, well-adjusted heating system will save money on fuel and prolong the furnace life.

* Lawn Care

Raking leaves and composting them will help keep lakes clean and provide you with a great natural fertilizer in the spring. Don’t forget to clean out gutters on the home as well and clear of leaves and debris that could create havoc in the spring. If you must fertilize your lawn, use a phosphorus-free produce and do not apply any fertilizer within 20 feet of any lakes or streams. If your home is not located near a lake, it is still important to go phosphorus-free because storm water runoff from lawns carries phosphorus into nearby water bodies.

* Sealing Windows and Air Leaks

A great tip for homeowner and cabin owners alike is sealing windows and air leaks as this will help conserve energy and save dollars for those who heat a cabin year-round. While you check for air leaks you may also want to have some steel wool on hand to plug any holes large enough to invite critters into the cabin while you are away. Mothballs and dryer sheets left around the cabin will keep unwanted pests out. Sprinkling of whole cloves will do the same trick and works excellent for leaving in campers and boats.

* Appliances

One item that is usually forgotten when shutting heat of in a cabin or home is the draining of any appliance that uses water. Check the owner’s manual for specific guidelines. Many electrical appliances use energy when they are plugged in – even when they are not in use. Conserve energy, prevent fires and protect appliances and electronics by unplugging them when they are not in use. Don’t forget to cover the outdoor air conditioning unit if you have one.

***Please note the new contact information for our Superintendent Keith Newman is 218-380-6114. Should you see a red light on at one of the lift stations, need a permit, or have an emergency please give Keith a call. For any other reasons please contact Executive Director Darla Hall at the District office direct at 218-485-8276.***

***Recap of Flooding in Moose Lake Area***

***As reported by Superintendent Keith Newman***

*6/20/2012*

*Regular monthly meeting of the MLWSSD. I reported to the Board that due to several heavy rains within a short period of time the sewer system appeared to be stressed. I had a pumper at the main lift removing water and shuttled down stream to alleviate levels at the lift station. Station “A” also had a high water alarm but the District was able to keep up with inflow. Things seemed to be getting better but the City of Moose Lake was slowly being flooded.*

*6/21/2012*

*The Moose Head River rose approximately nineteen feet above its normal level causing widespread flooding in and around the city. When I arrived at the office they had a city works employee on the speaker phone discussing current conditions and wondering how long before the sewer would back up into the health care facilities and of course then in the MLWSSD. I had brought up in the discussion that as long as the river lift keeps running that would keep the prison, MSOP, Mercy, Augustanna, and the MLWSSD safe for the time being. It would still pump over to the main station collection well and discharge into the river. This was agreed upon and at that point I was asked to monitor the river lift station each hour and report to the City and the Hospital CEO if anything was to occur. I continued to do this throughout the flood along with continuous monitoring of our own system. The city’s main pump station located west of the bridge on the north side of the river was surrounded by water and sand bags. It houses three one hundred and twenty five horsepower pumps. The Cities staff and public worked diligently to keep the sewer station clear of water and pumping. This was helping to alleviate the water going into many people’s basements. I recall being at my desk at Mercy Hospital and hearing on the scanner that the city had lost the main sewer pump station. A coupling device had let loose spraying water in some electrical controls cutting power to the pumps. Homes and businesses immediately began to feel the effects as water began to rise in their basements or lower levels. Several of us were summons to the CEO’s office at the hospital to consider evacuation of the hospital and health care center.*

*At a meeting the Mayor of Moose Lake asked me to bypass Station “1” to reduce intake at the south river lift near the Chamber building. At the meeting Frank Stuemke, Minnesota Rural Water, presented a mutual aid program called MnWarn where municipal members are able to get equipment and manpower to assist in situations such as our flood. The City of Moose Lake and MLWSSD preformed a resolution by consensus in order to get immediate help from other member cities. Once that was taken care of I was instructed to call the State Duty Officer and he would begin a search for equipment and manpower to man our Station “1”. Shortly thereafter we received word that assistance was coming from the City of St. Francis, MN. Parish Barten, City of St. Francis arrives shortly before midnight.*

*6/22/2012*

*We began bypass at Station “1”. Bypass from manhole to culvert across Coffee Lake Road. I contacted the MPCA in Duluth to report the bypass and update as to what was taking place. Shortly before six a.m. I checked back in with Parish on my way to work. He will need to leave today at 11:00 a.m. MnWarn had no replacement so left work to relieve Parish. City of Moose Lake checked in for a*

*Continued on page 4*

*possible person to watch the station for me overnight later on that evening. When they saw the*

*small amount that was being bypassed they called City Administrator Mark Vahlsing, and they decided to let MLWSSD pump to the city and save manpower for use at the city lift stations.*

*6/23/2012 – 7/01/2012*

*Called MPCA to notify that MLWSSD had stopped bypassing. I then covered the Saturday and Sunday shift for City of Moose Lake to monitor system. Later that week I returned the equipment to the City of St. Francis and thanked them kindly. As the weekend was approaching MPCA called to see how things were going. I informed them between the City and the Sewer District we were working together to monitor entire system. I then covered the 6/30 and 7/1 shift for the City of Moose Lake.*

*I must say that the work the board, past and present, has done with our Infrastructure Replacement Plan paid off big time. Had the system been in its original condition we would have had many problems to contend with. Many of our collection wells were raised up to six feet in height. Manholes raised, sealed and topped with water tight manhole covers. Sewer lines repaired and slip lined. New stations with new pumps. I feel all these improvements prevented what could have been a catastrophe. We had a lot of inflow but because of the improvements it was manageable.*

*The water levels in the local lakes reached historic levels. There were people kayaking over Sand Lake Road. The beaches disappeared under water. The creek between Sand and Coffee Lake raged through their like never before washing out giant culverts and collapsing roadways. Low lands usually separated were now united swallowing up roads and buildings. I believe this was the first time in history that the District has ever had to discharge anywhere but to the City of Moose Lake for processing. It was difficult mentally to set up the pump and begin pumping into the ditch knowing that it lead to Coffee Lake and then to the Moose Horn River. I did utilize a draft screen on the suction hose to prevent solids and paper being discharged. After we were finished with bypassing there were several very heavy rains and I think this helped rinse the culvert and ditch.*

*Keith Newman*

*Superintendent for Sewer District*

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