

WATER NEWS



AMADOR WATER AGENCY

12800 RIDGE ROAD, SUTTER CREEK, CA 95685
209-223-3018 WWW.AMADORWATER.ORG

AWA's Water Distribution Crew

It was a dark and stormy week...

Last December, a low snowstorm followed by days of freezing temperatures brought much of Amador County to a standstill. Roads iced over and power was interrupted for hours in many areas. And water pipes froze.



AWA's six-man Distribution Crew is responsible for keeping water flowing through the miles of pipes that make up the Agency's countywide water systems. For them, the initial power outages created headaches as many of the Agency's electric-powered pumps stopped delivering water to storage tanks all over the upcountry. AWA customers were asked to conserve water until the tanks could be replenished.

In the following days, as the county slowly thawed out, Distribution Supervisor Lance Roberts could see on AWA's "SCADA" computerized monitoring system that the water storage tanks were not refilling as fast as expected. And he knew why. Water was pouring out of broken pipes on properties throughout the system; no one knew from how many places.

Lance's crew, with help from AWA meter-reader Susan Jauch, began a tedious process of locating and repairing the leaks, one by one. A few leaks were reported by customers, but most were found by driving or walking along the system, looking and listening for running water. Susan used her meter-reading familiarity with AWA customers to pinpoint homes that were unoccupied, where broken pipes were found in backyards and inside unheated houses.

The process was so time-consuming that AWA staff from the engineering and construction departments pitched in to help the Distribution Crew. Many overtime hours were logged before the storm damage was completely repaired.

NOT ONLY FOR EMERGENCIES: You'll see AWA's Distribution Crew out responding to customer requests for new service, shutoffs and troubleshooting countywide, from Camanche to Sutter Creek, and Buckhorn to Plymouth. Staff rotates on-call shifts so a technician is available if needed after hours. A year-round preventative maintenance program assures that pumps and pipes deliver water 24/7/365.

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Nick Tamantini (right) and Mike Thompson (below), two members of the six-man Distribution Crew charged with keeping AWA's pipes and pumps working over hundreds of square miles in Amador County.



Analysis of Upcountry Water System Continues



Interim General Manager Gene Mancebo leads discussion at a February “brainstorming session” with customers on ways to improve or replace the CAWP raw water transmission system.

Upcountry water customers were well-represented at a workshop held by the Amador Water Agency in February on proposed improvements to the Central Amador Water Project (CAWP) water transmission system.

Billed as a “brainstorming session,” this was the second recent workshop on CAWP water transmission issues and possible options for improvements. After a background presentation by AWA staff, the audience, staff and directors spent over four hours discussing ways to extend the life of the aging pumped system or replace it with a gravity-flow pipeline.

Water supply for fire protection, installing a solar power system for the pumps, the reliability of the Tiger Creek Regulator, and concerns about how long federal grant and loan offers for construction projects will be available were all topics raised by the full house of upcountry ratepayers.

CAWP provides wholesale and retail treated water to upcountry customers and communities in Amador County. In the late 1980s, the Amador Water Agency and CAWP districts began planning to replace CAWP’s pumped water transmission system with a gravity flow system which would greatly reduce the impacts of rising electricity costs of running the CAWP pumping stations.

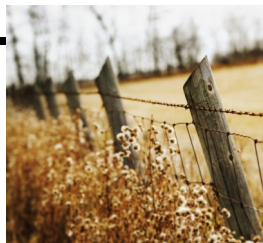
Since 2003, AWA directors and the CAWP wholesale districts have moved forward on the concept and approved paying for design and environmental review of a Gravity Supply Line (GSL), while looking for the best way to fund this major undertaking. In 2009, federal stimulus funding increased the amount of grant money typically available to AWA for projects, and the Agency has applied for a government grant and low interest loan to pay for a GSL, if AWA’s Board of Directors approves that option. Also, the current recession in the construction industry has driven construction costs to a historic low point.

This spring, AWA directors will be considering the best approach to improvements on the CAWP system at a series of public meetings. At press time, AWA directors were scheduled to consider the GSL option again at their Board meeting on March 25th.

Weed Abatement ...

Spring time brings weeding chores along the AWA system, just as it does for homeowners. Customers sometimes ask why we need to perform weed abatement, and there are two important reasons. Accessibility is critical — as we all know, it doesn’t take long for berry vines, poison oak, tall grass and manzanita to take over a

cleared area. AWA trucks need access to pipes, pumps and valves to operate the system and repair it when needed. Keeping the grass down in these access areas is also important for fire safety — hot mufflers and sparking tools are a common cause of grass fires.



Thank You!

Special thanks to AWA and CAWP customers who did a great job conserving water during this winter’s storms and power outages. During a power outage, water pumps and boosters on AWA’s systems may not be operating. AWA has a limited number of back-up generators, but not enough to make up for a widespread outage. Thank you all for limiting your water use until the emergencies were over.

New Emergency Generators at AWA

New emergency generators installed at the Agency's Tanner Administration Office and shop building promise improved customer service during power outages.

The generators will automatically provide power, day or night, to the Agency's computers and allow the AWA offices to function during power outages.

Power interruptions at the Tanner facility, such as the one that occurred in December, 2009 (see story on page 1) have damaged AWA's computers and forced staff to close the Agency's doors to the public until the power was restored.

Power outages at the Tanner site also bring down computer-controlled equipment in the Tanner Water Treatment Plant and elsewhere on the AWA system.

The new back-up generators, purchased from Short Circuit Electric of Drytown, will allow those systems to stay up and running during outages.

The generators will also keep phones and computers running in the AWA office, so Customer Service staff can field your calls and keep customers and the media informed in the event of outages or emergencies.

Looking for AWA info?
Check out our website:
www.amadorwater.org

- ◆ Water quality reports
- ◆ Water and wastewater rates
- ◆ AWA Board of Directors and contact numbers
- ◆ Board meeting agendas and minutes
- ◆ Project and environmental documents
- ◆ Staff contact numbers
- ◆ Water conservation tips
- ◆ Newsletter back issues

Other Projects in the News...

Gayla Manor Leach Field — Site preparation work began over the winter on construction of a new leach field for the residents of Gayla Manor subdivision. AWA crews met a Feb. 15th deadline to remove trees on the leach field site before the spring bird nesting season.

Weather permitting, AWA construction crews will install the main piping and dosing siphons under the roadway this spring. Work on the leach field itself will begin once the rainy season is over. The project is expected to be completed by October 15, 2010.

This project will expand the system's capacity to meet a 100-year wet season occurrence and satisfy the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Gayla Manor subdivision's wastewater treatment system has been out of compliance with state wastewater storage requirements since 2003. The Agency received \$375,612 in federal stimulus money to pay for the leach field project.

Camanche Sustainability Study — In February, the Agency received a \$247,547.00 Local Groundwater Assistance Grant from California Department of Water Resources Proposition 84 funds to pay for a study to gauge how much water is available in the Lake Camanche Village groundwater system.

AWA's Lake Camanche Village system is supplied by wells. The state has placed restrictions on new water service at Lake Camanche Village because of questions about the quantity and quality of the underground water supply there. The sustainable safe yield analysis and groundwater management plan will be developed by a specialized hydrology consultant to the Agency and should be complete by mid-2010.



Above, Tree removal and erosion control at Gayla Manor in preparation for expanding the subdivision's current over-taxed leach field. Work on the leach field itself will begin once the rainy season is over.



Above, "Well 14" on the Lake Camanche Village water system. Well 14 was constructed in 2008 to assist in meeting water needs as other Camanche system wells declined in yield.

Conserving Water: 20% by 2020

State grants and loans are important sources of funding for water and wastewater infrastructure in Amador County. To be eligible for this valuable funding, the Agency must have a water conservation plan in place that meets new state requirements. The state goal? To reduce per capita water use by 20 percent by the year 2020.

The Agency Board of Directors and staff are working with a water conservation consultant to develop a program for the Amador Water Agency that will meet the state's required Best Management Practices, including:

- ◆ **Rebates for high-efficiency plumbing fixtures and washing machines**
- ◆ **Mandatory water metering**
- ◆ **Tiered water rates**
- ◆ **Water audits and leak repairs for customers and for the Agency systems**
- ◆ **A conservation coordinator for the Agency**
- ◆ **Public information and school education programs**
- ◆ **Incentives for large users to conserve**
- ◆ **Ordinances prohibiting water wasting**
- ◆ **Incentives or ordinances for requiring water-efficient fixtures in new residential construction**

Directors are considering how to pay for new activities, rebates and incentives at a time when the Amador Water Agency has cut operating costs from its current budget.

On the other hand, water conservation efforts could save the Agency money by reducing the need for new water supplies, reducing the amount of water treatment needed and lowering energy costs.

The Water Agency has identified conservation as one leg of a "three-legged stool" to support the future water needs for Amador County. The other two "legs" are the use of recycled water and new water supply projects.

Watch for notices of public workshops and meetings on this important project — customer feedback will be an important factor in AWA's ultimate water conservation program.

More reasons to save water...

Conserving water has broad benefits to the community. When less water is used, there is less demand on water treatment plants and the system as a whole. Also, "water in equals water out" so water conservation also stretches the capacity of the county's wastewater treatment plants. When customers use water wisely, it lowers the Agency's energy bills. And of course, when YOU use less water, YOU save money!

Distribution Crew... continued from page 1

AWA DISTRIBUTION CREW:

Distribution Supervisor
Lance Roberts
Dennis Larson
Nick Lawson
Marty McNew
Nick Tamantini
Michael Thompson

The Distribution Crew plays an important part in maintaining water quality as well. You may see the guys taking samples from tanks or letting water flow from a hydrant, flushing the system's lines to keep water fresh.

"Meeting state requirements by collecting water quality samples is a big part of our job," says Lance.

So when you fill up a big glass of water, or to make a pot of coffee, or enjoy a refreshing shower, take a second to remember AWA's Distribution Crew, working every day to assure that plenty of fresh, clean water is available when you turn on the tap.