



UP THE CREEK

August 1, 2016

Wild Words

Up the Creek receives reams of unsolicited literature that's (mostly) related to the water industry. It's all free, except for the requirement that we fill out and submit a long survey every so often. We meet this requirement by throwing the survey in the trash as soon as it appears. This works as well as actually filling it out and sending it back - we've tried it both ways, with identical results. The mags keep right on coming.

The content of these trade magazines is sometimes of interest to us, so we flip through them before they join the surveys in the landfill. The result of this casual perusal is sometimes very educational. We have learned that there is a small dictionary's worth of words that have gone feral and have taken on meanings that describe things we thought we already had good words for. Just a few examples:

Line stop – applies to a thing that looks just like a “valve.” We suspect this term became necessary because there are too many companies making valves. The logic being that a new name will confer a brief marketing advantage. We would be happier if all these valve/line stop manufacturers would just get together and agree to make a device that actually opens and closes when you turn the top of it, without seizing up, breaking, leaking, or any other words that we have come to associate with “valve.” But maybe the word doesn't mean what we think it should.

Custody transfer – a phrase that used to belong to the ~~prison~~ correctional industry, but now applies to instruments that measure the transfer of some product, in other words, “meter.” Custody transfer instruments can be made much more pricey than meters, hence the need for a more expensive descriptive term. Actually, the concept of custody transfer has some attractions for Up the Creek. If custody of water is transferred from us to you via the device previously known as a “meter,” then it's in your custody after that point. If you become disgusted or crazy from using it, sorry; we wash our hands with it – er – of it. And if said water should escape from your custody, causing the custody transfer instrument to hum and vibrate, the standard consequence is for you to transfer custody of your bank account to USCDWUA.

Sometimes wild words show up in wild concepts, as seen in this headline, “**Breaking Down the Dual Personality of Abrasion-Resistant Pipe.**” While we don't use abrasion-resistant pipe (there's not quite enough dirt in our water to require it), we are intrigued by the idea that pipes could have dual personalities - even single personalities. A little research into personality types was undertaken by Up the Creek to learn what personalities our own pipes might have. We learned that two basic traits are *extroversion* and *introversion*. The short translations are “outward turning” and “inward turning.” We know from experience that extroverted pipes are no fun. They outward-turn their contents and make a mess. We prefer our pipes to hold it all in. We are revising our material specifications to read that all new pipes shall be certified introverts.

Anyway, we finally read the whole article on schizoid pipes. It listed some jobs for which abrasion-resistant pipe might be used, including carrying volcanic ash and ground glass, sewage sludge and dog food. We understand now how such pipes could become seriously disturbed. And there's probably some emotional stress on the custody transfer instruments too. That's why we prefer our C-T instruments to be extroverts. Exuberance is a good thing in our meters, even if they get carried away with their numbers sometimes. Keeps 'em sane.