**SOUTHWEST HARBOR WATER & SEWER DISTRICT**

**Box 1100**

**26 Village Green Way.**

**Southwest Harbor, ME 04679**

**207-244-3948**

Dear Customers,

The Southwest Harbor Water & Sewer District was created on January 1, 2016. One of our biggest tasks was managing your Wastewater Treatment Plant. Over the past 3 years we have made huge strides in operating, maintaining and managing the Plant. The first year we spent over $80,000.00 above normal operating costs cleaning built up solids throughout the plant. The second year we repaired and replaced damaged or worn out equipment. This past year our Staff has fine-tuned Plant operations in the most efficient and effective way possible to keep costs to a minimum while producing superior effluent.

Your Wastewater Treatment Plant is similar to a private septic system, but for a large portion of the Town. Our job is to operate the Plant and clean all the wastewater from our customers by removing the solids and hazardous materials to create a clean discharge of water into our harbor. This helps insure a healthy harbor and allows our densely built neighborhoods, our business district and areas in Town that are near surface water to be habitable without contaminating our various natural waters with their sewer discharges.

Operating the Plant is like growing a garden, except we grow micro-organisms. We have to maintain very specific pH, oxygen and organic levels to optimize these organism’s healthy growth so they can do their job in transforming organic waste materials to sludge. The sludge is then removed by truck to Ellsworth’s Wastewater Facility for further treatment. The remaining clean water is disinfected and discharged into our harbor. If material is dumped down your drain that can change the pH, oxygen demand or is toxic to these micro-organisms, it will cause them to die off…this includes **too much organic** loading. The level of organics coming into the plant has risen from **60** mg/l 5 years ago **to 140** mg/l today.

Though we run the Wastewater Treatment systems as efficient as we can, the costs of operations and maintenance continue to go up. Some costs, like insurances and energy, we cannot control, other costs such as sludge removal, repairs and maintenance we can…. or we should say “**You Can**”. The biggest costs to the District in treating your waste water is sludge removal, (removing organics), these include $40,000.00 in chemical use, $36,000.00 in electrical costs and $160,000.00 in sludge hauling and disposal fees.

The cost of repairs and maintenance for the sewer collection pipes, Lift Stations and the Wastewater Treatment Plant are directly reflected by the amounts of solids, (organics), we have to remove and the number of inorganics that cause clogs and damage to our pipes and equipment. This pamphlet is being sent to you to show you how **you** can keep your usage **costs** **down** by reducing problems we incur in maintaining your wastewater treatment system, thus allowing us to keep costs to a minimum.

Years ago, many separated our “trash”, (the non-organics), from our “garbage”, (the organics), and they were handled in separate ways, but these practices changed as our lives got busier. Folks started dumping messy food items and liquids down their drains so as not to let liquids leak out from the trash bag or deal with odors from organics and meat scraps.

Herein lies the problem, waste water treatment plants are designed to handle the flow and wastes produced from human sanitary activities only. The easiest thing to educate our customers would be to simply say **“DO NOT FLUSH OR POUR ANYTHING DOWN YOUR SEWER LINES THAT IS NOT DIRECT HUMAN WASTE OR WASH WATER”**, but an explanation of why, and how to handle certain wastes may be more educational.

Please take a minute to read the enclosed pamphlet and post it on your fridge, or other easily noticed area, so all in the household can learn ways to help keep your sewer lines and our equipment running well and treatment costs down. If you have a multifamily building or rental properties, we can supply you with as many copies of the pamphlet you will need to educate your tenants. There is also a list of ways to dispose of items and materials not meant for sewer disposal on our web site.

Thank you for your time and cooperation,

Steven Kenney

District Manager