



A Community Newsletter from the Contra Costa Water District | Volume 15, Number 1, Winter 01



PHOTO BY STEPHEN JOSEPH

Keeping Your Tap Water Clean and Safe for Drinking

Safe, clean drinking water is a necessity of life, and the Contra Costa Water District works hard to provide you with a reliable supply of this necessity.

CCWD carefully protects its reservoirs and canal to prevent contamination. For example, at the Los Vaqueros Reservoir, where 100,000 acre feet of water is stored, body contact with the water is prohibited to prevent the spread of disease. Other ways the Water District protects Los Vaqueros water include tight restrictions on grazing to keep cattle away from waterways and a ban on gasoline-powered recreational boats when the reservoir opens for boating and fishing this summer.

CCWD also closely monitors the Delta and aggressively works for ecological improvements to keep it clean and healthy. As part of this effort, the Water District has been involved in the CALFED process, which is a consortium of state and federal agencies working to restore the Delta.

Along with source water protection, careful treatment of the water is still essential before it can be delivered to homes and businesses as drinking water. That's why

the best available treatment processes are used to make your water safe to drink.

If you are receiving this newsletter at your home or workplace, your tap water is treated by CCWD or one of the following providers that receive untreated water from CCWD and treat it themselves: cities of Antioch, Pittsburg and Martinez, California Cities Water Co. in Bay Point and the Diablo Water District in Oakley. Some of these providers have alternative sources, such as wells or other Delta intakes, to augment the water they receive from CCWD.

Overall, tap water in the United States is widely known to be among the safest in the world. Despite that, you have probably read about contaminants in drinking water and want more information. Here is a briefing on contaminants that have been in the news.

Methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE)

MTBE is a gasoline additive that reduces air pollution. Gasoline producers began using it extensively in 1992 to meet federal clean air requirements. MTBE's use is now being phased out nationally because it has contaminated some groundwater supplies as the result of leaking fuel tanks or fuel spills.

So far, MTBE has been undetected at CCWD's Delta intakes, based on State of California testing standards that set the minimum level for detection at 5 parts per billion. To protect the water after it is pumped from our intakes, CCWD does not allow gasoline-fueled recreational boats in its reservoirs. In addition, CCWD is one of many water agencies working to actively pursue solutions to MTBE contamination.

***Mycobacterium avium* Complex**

Mycobacterium avium Complex (MAC) is a group of pathogens that is very common in the environment. They can be found in soil, dust and water. Individuals with healthy immune systems normally resist these

(continued on reverse)

Want to Know More?

For more information about the tap water in your community, please call one of the following points of contact:

CCWD (Central Contra Costa):	Jean Zacher – (925) 688-8156
City of Antioch:	Lori Sarti – (925) 779-7024
City of Martinez:	Alan Pellegrini – (925) 372-3587
City of Pittsburg:	John Edwards – (925) 439-4026
Diablo Water District (Oakley):	Danny Bowers – (925) 625-2112
California Cities Water Co. (Bay Point):	Customer Service – (800) 999-4033

CCWD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

James Pretti
President

Noble O. Elcenko, D.C.
Vice President

Elizabeth R. Anello
Bette Boatman
Joseph L. Campbell

Writer/Editor
Gina Oltman
goltman@ccwater.com

General Manager
Walter J. Bishop



CONTRA COSTA
WATER DISTRICT
1331 Concord Ave.
P.O. Box H2O
Concord, CA 94524
(925) 688-8000
<http://www.ccwater.com>

The Contra Costa Water District provides water to 430,000 Contra Costa County residents. Approximately 220,000 residents in Clayton, Clyde, Concord, Martinez, Pacheco, Pleasant Hill, Port Costa, and Walnut Creek receive water that has been treated by a District water treatment plant.

The other 210,000 are served by local water agencies that receive raw water from CCWD, then treat, distribute and bill for it themselves. These agencies are City of Antioch, City of Martinez, City of Pittsburg and the California Cities Water Company (Bay Point). Oakley residents are served by a jointly owned CCWD/Diablo Water District treatment plant.

(continued from front)

pathogens. For people with compromised immune systems, these pathogens can cause pulmonary and other health problems.

Conventional treatment processes used by CCWD and other providers are aimed at eliminating pathogens. Filtration, a standard water treatment process, is very effective in removing pathogens such as *Mycobacterium avium* Complex. Other treatment methods used with filtration, such as chloramine and ozone gas disinfection, increase effectiveness. In addition, the quality of water in distribution pipelines is monitored frequently.

Chromium-6

Chromium is a naturally occurring element. There are several species of chromium, one of which is Chromium-6, an inorganic chemical that can be toxic. Chromium-6 has been in the news lately because it has been found in groundwater, mostly in Southern California, due to industrial contamination. Research is now underway to determine the extent of Chromium-6 contamination statewide and its health effects.

CCWD tests its water for total chromium, which includes all types of chromium. Testing has shown CCWD source water to have very low total chromium levels – less than the 10 parts per billion minimum level established by the state for reporting as “detectable.” The maximum allowable level is 50 parts per billion.

Cryptosporidium

Cryptosporidium is a single-cell parasite that

lives in fecal matter in the intestines of animals and people. This microscopic pathogen can cause a disease called cryptosporidiosis when humans have oral contact with something contaminated. Drinking



Water quality is closely monitored by regular testing.

untreated water or swallowing contaminated water in a lake are two common ways people can contract cryptosporidiosis.

The most common symptoms of cryptosporidiosis include diarrhea, nausea, and weight loss. People with healthy immune systems rarely are sick for more than two weeks, however cryptosporidiosis can be fatal to very young, elderly, frail and people with compromised immune systems.

Protection of source water supplies, like the measures taken at the Los Vaqueros Reservoir Watershed, is an important step toward keeping drinking water free of

cryptosporidium. Once water reaches the treatment plant, filtration is used to remove cryptosporidium and other pathogens, and the treated water is tested for bacteria. At CCWD treatment plants, ozone is used as a disinfectant.

Pharmaceuticals

Concerns about drug residues in water supplies have recently been covered by the news media. Some studies have detected antibiotics, hormones and other pharmaceuticals at very low levels (the low parts per trillion) in some water supplies. The federal government has launched a nationwide study to determine the significance of these findings.

Drug residues are released into the environment by humans and animals through their waste. These compounds are generally not removed at wastewater treatment facilities and can make their way back into water supplies.

Some scientists are concerned that antibiotic residues can eventually cause bacteria to resist these drugs. Other scientists believe the levels of pharmaceuticals being found in water are too low to have a significant effect on human health.

CCWD is a member of the American Water Works Association Research Foundation, which is the largest single organization dedicated to drinking water research. This organization has invested more than \$180 million in research to protect public health.

Your Water is Protected by Federal and State Law

The Safe Drinking Water Act has helped make the United States' drinking water supply one of the cleanest and safest in the world. This federal law empowers the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to set health and safety standards for tap water nationwide. Individual states are required to adopt standards at least as stringent as the EPA's, and your water provider must comply with these standards. In California, the drinking water standards are generally more stringent than the EPA's.



Contra Costa Canal

Under state and federal laws, public water systems must monitor water quality by regularly testing for more than 100 individual contaminants and report their findings to state health officials and the public. Water is tested before and after treatment and while it travels through distribution pipelines to homes and businesses. All testing is conducted by state-certified environmental laboratories.

Your water provider must also report testing results to you every year. The Contra Costa Water District and water utilities in Antioch, Pittsburg, Martinez and Oakley report their results in the Annual Water Quality Report they distribute to nearly 200,000 homes and businesses in Central and East Contra Costa. (Bay Point residents receive their report from California Cities Water Company.) CCWD alone spends more than \$1 million a year conducting thousands of water quality tests.

The Source of Your Water

Contra Costa Water District water begins as snowfall in California's mountains. As it melts and trickles to lower elevations, it is stored in reservoirs and enters rivers and streams. CCWD draws this water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for 430,000 customers in Central and Eastern Contra Costa County.

The Contra Costa Water District treats this water and provides it to about 220,000 residents of Clayton, Clyde, Concord, Pacheco, Port Costa, and parts of Pleasant Hill, Martinez and Walnut Creek. CCWD also sells untreated water (raw water) to the following water purveyors: the cities of Antioch, Martinez and Pittsburg, the California Cities Water Company (Bay Point), and the Diablo Water District (Oakley). These five agencies treat the water and bill their own customers for the water.

If Your Immune System Is Compromised...

Tap water is clean and safe for the general population to drink, however people with compromised immune systems should consult with their physicians or other health care providers for advice about drinking water. This includes people with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, people who have under-

gone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, frail elderly people and infants. Although treatment processes in the United States are among the best in the world, they can not guarantee total purification of tap water.