



Orange Water and Sewer Authority

OWASA is Carrboro-Chapel Hill's not-for-profit public service agency delivering high quality water, wastewater, and reclaimed water services.

August 26, 2021

Mayor Pam Hemminger
Town of Chapel Hill
405 Martin Luther King Jr.
Blvd Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Mayor Lydia Lavelle
Town of Carrboro
301 West Main Street
Carrboro, NC 27510

Chair Renee Price
Orange County Board of
Commissioners
Post Office Box 8181
Hillsborough, NC 27278

Dear Mayor Hemminger, Mayor Lavelle, and Chair Price:

We are pleased to submit this report on our services, projects, and initiatives since April 2021. This report includes information on the following items:

1. Moratorium on Service Disconnections Extended
2. Fiscal Year 2022 Budget
3. COVID-19 Response
4. Diversity and Inclusion
5. 2020 Annual Water Quality Report Card Published
6. Board Membership
7. Strategic Plan
8. Long-Range Water Supply Plan
9. Hurricane Season
10. Key Infrastructure Investments

Moratorium on Service Disconnections Extended:

In late July 2021, Orange County extended its local State of Emergency related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic indefinitely. Using the local State of Emergency as guidance, OWASA has deferred resuming standard bill collection practices for residential customers. Currently, OWASA has about 900 accounts that are past due, 550 of which are individually metered residential customers. The average amount past due is about \$375.

Once OWASA resumes standard collection practices, we will be giving a 30-day notice to customers with past-due balances before resuming standard collection practices. Under standard collection practices, customers who miss two consecutive payments of their monthly bill are subject to service disconnection. OWASA will be actively promoting fee-free payment plans of up to 18 months to customers who are past due once we resume standard collection practices.

OWASA has been tracking and communicating with customers who are past due on their accounts and encouraging them to seek assistance from various resources to pay down any balances, including OWASA's Care to Share bill-assistance program. These various funding resources have also been updated on OWASA's website throughout the pandemic, including



Orange County Emergency Housing Assistance and the NC HOPE Program when funding has been available.

OWASA has been working closely with Orange County Department of Social Services to consider how a new, but temporary, low-income household water assistance program (LIHWAP) will be implemented in Orange County. Federal funds for this program are anticipated to be available to communities in North Carolina in January 2022.

We are grateful to our partners across the county for the continued work on providing available assistance to customers.

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget:

OWASA's Board of Directors approved the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY 2022) Budget and schedule of rates, fees, and charges at a meeting on June 10, 2021.

The approved budget includes a 5% rate increase to support our continued investments in our critical infrastructure to increase reliability and resiliency of our water and wastewater systems as well as investing in our Team and organizational priorities. A 5% rate increase will raise the monthly bill for a residential customer using the community average of 4,000 gallons per month by \$3.79 to \$79.46.

The Board of Directors held public hearings on the budget and rate adjustment proposals in May 2021. The approved rates will go into effect in October 2021.

With UNC and local schools planning to hold in-person classes in the fall, we anticipate that water demand for FY 2022 will likely return to pre-pandemic levels.

COVID-19 Response:

OWASA is continuing to monitor the COVID-19 impact in our community, including the rise in cases with the Delta variant, in order to protect the safety and health of Team members and the public while also delivering essential services to the community.

As part of the ongoing wastewater monitoring program in place with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, OWASA is continuing to provide wastewater samples to monitor for any change to the amount of viral particles in the community's wastewater. An increase or decrease in these viral particles in the community's wastewater can reflect an increase or decrease in the presence of COVID-19 in the general population.

OWASA staff members who were working remotely since March 2020 returned to the office on May 17, 2021. Additionally, OWASA implemented a telework policy to allow those who are able to work remotely the option to do so two days each week to allow for flexibility while also bringing back some of the morale and camaraderie that grows through in-person interactions.

OWASA's main office opened for the public on June 1, 2021, to allow customers to come in to pay bills and for OWASA staff to meet with contractors as well as members of the public if needed.

A mask mandate for all OWASA Team members and visitors when in OWASA facilities was reimplemented on August 2, 2021, due to the rise in COVID-19 cases.

In coordination with local government partners, OWASA implemented vaccine incentives and ongoing testing protocols for Team members in hopes of increasing the vaccination rate among the OWASA Team. OWASA Team members who provide proof of vaccination will receive a bonus. Team members who do not provide proof of vaccination will be required to submit weekly COVID-19 test results beginning on September 1, 2021.

The OWASA Board of Directors will continue meeting remotely while the North Carolina State of Emergency remains in place.

Diversity and Inclusion:

Promoting diversity and inclusion is a top priority for OWASA, which has had an active Diversity and Inclusion program since 2016.

OWASA's Team is continuing our Diversity and Inclusion work and provided the Board of Directors with an update at its meeting on July 8, 2021. Diversity and Inclusion updates are provided to the Board three times per year, and the next update is expected to occur in September 2021.

Key initiatives of the Diversity and Inclusion Program in recent months have included holding organization-wide meetups facilitated by the Diversity Resource Group to discuss implicit bias. Additionally, Diversity and Inclusion competencies have been put in the employee performance evaluation process, and the Diversity Recruitment Group has hosted training sessions for supervisors on the recruitment, selection, and hiring process.

OWASA hosted a career fair on June 24, 2021, in our attempt to recruit diverse candidates to fill multiple open positions. In addition, where possible, gender-neutral bathroom signage has been added across OWASA facilities, and OWASA is providing female hygiene products in all female bathrooms and gender-neutral bathrooms.

Our Diversity and Inclusion efforts go beyond OWASA staff trainings and policies by extending into growing partnerships within our community and expanding the minority- and women-owned businesses that are bidding for and being awarded our projects.

More information on recent Diversity and Inclusion efforts can be found in the [agenda material for the July 2021 Board update](#).

2020 Annual Water Quality Report Card Published:

OWASA once again met all State and Federal drinking water regulations during the 2020 calendar year. Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), the annual water quality report card provides details on where the community's water comes from, how OWASA treats it, how we all can work to protect our water supply, and more on the OWASA Team working every day to deliver safe drinking water across Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and parts of southern Orange County.

The annual water quality report card is an opportunity to highlight how OWASA measures up against drinking water regulations to ensure customers that the water being delivered to their home is safe to drink and meets all regulatory standards. This year's report card also highlights the team in the Jones Ferry Road Water Treatment Plant laboratory and the work of OWASA's Customer Service team in helping customers every day. The COVID-19 pandemic forced adjustments in how each of these teams work on a day-to-day basis but working together as a team and adapting to the environment proved to be a success.

The report card also showcases other OWASA initiatives, including the ongoing update to the Long-Range Water Supply Plan and the Affordability Program. Customers also received a flyer in the mail with highlights from the report card and a direct link to the full report.

Board Membership:

The OWASA Board voted in July to move all Board meetings to the OWASA Community Room to start at 6 p.m., streamed on the internet, when in-person meetings resume. The OWASA Board will continue meeting remotely during the declared North Carolina State of Emergency due to COVID-19.

OWASA welcomed Todd BenDor to the Board of Directors in May 2021 after his appointment by the Town of Chapel Hill to fill a vacant seat. The Board voted in June 2021 to appoint Jo Leslie (Jody) Eimers (Orange County) as Chair, Yinka Ayankoya (Carrboro) as Vice Chair, and John Morris (Chapel Hill) as Secretary.

There are two openings on the Board: one Carrboro seat, and one Chapel Hill seat. As is typical, the OWASA Board is facing many important decisions in the coming year, including approving next year's budget and the development of a new strategic plan that will guide our investments and priorities for the next 5-6 years. Having a full Board is critical to being able to keep the important work of the community's water and wastewater utility moving forward and preparing for the future.

We continue to encourage interest in serving on the Board in our community engagement efforts and appreciate your assistance in attracting a diverse applicant pool. OWASA is using our website and social media channels to provide information on what is involved with Board membership and participation and to recruit new applicants.

OWASA embraces diversity and inclusion in everything we do, and we would like to encourage all interested candidates to apply for Board Member appointments. Our Board addresses a wide range of issues. The only true qualification needed is a genuine commitment to serve the community.

Thank you for your continued support in appointing members to OWASA's Board of Directors. If we can assist you, please let us know.

Strategic Plan:

A new strategic plan will help guide OWASA investments and priorities for OWASA staff over the next 5-6 years.

OWASA's Board approved the process for developing a new strategic plan in May 2021. OWASA has since established guiding principles to direct next steps in the development of the new strategic plan, including ensuring that goals identified through the strategic plan further OWASA's mission, vision, and values.

We are currently building a foundation of information from OWASA's Board, staff, community stakeholders, and the community at large. Our environmental scan includes a community water and sewer survey (which is currently live), stakeholder engagement sessions, and a review of strategic plans of our local government partners.

With the benefit of the environmental scan, OWASA will then identify and prioritize strategic goals and initiatives.

OWASA staff will continue to provide updates to stakeholders and the community throughout the strategic planning process.

Long-Range Water Supply Plan:

OWASA is continuing the process of updating the community's Long-Range Water Supply Plan.

Following the completion of the initial round of community engagement sessions, OWASA's Board has approved guiding principles to evaluate alternatives for ensuring a safe, reliable source of drinking water for our community through 2070. We are now evaluating the alternatives to secure the community's allocation of water from Jordan Lake.

OWASA will solicit additional community feedback after the Board of Directors selects its preferred alternative.

Hurricane Season:

Hurricane Season officially began on June 1, and OWASA has been sharing emergency preparedness messaging with the community should inclement weather impact our service area. OWASA takes steps ahead of inclement weather to ensure we are prepared to continue essential services for the community throughout the event. To alert the community to these efforts, and to encourage customers to take preparatory steps themselves, OWASA [published a series of videos](#) about emergency preparedness.

OWASA uses OC Alerts to notify customers if there is an impact to their service as a result of inclement weather. A key message of our outreach is to ask community members (residents and those who work in the area) to sign up for OC Alerts.

Key Infrastructure Investments:

OWASA has made progress on several critical infrastructure projects since April 2021 and has some projects planned for the coming months.

Projects totaling about \$6 million are underway to improve drinking water distribution and treatment facilities at the Jones Ferry Road Water Treatment Plant (WTP). To date, work completed includes chemical facility and finished water pumping improvements within the WTP. Water line improvements are underway directly in front of the WTP to build in additional redundancy and resiliency to support the community's water infrastructure and maintain a high level of service for our customers. Design work and the State Revolving Fund [SRF] application process are also underway for electrical system improvements at the WTP; construction on this phase is likely to begin in the summer of 2022.

OWASA also expects to begin construction on the second phase of the West Cameron Avenue water line replacement project this fall and winter. The initial portion of this project was completed last year, and piping was replaced in the intersection of West Cameron Avenue and Columbia Street. That section was completed separately because of the impact on traffic in the area. Phase 2 will take place roughly from Pittsboro Street down to Merritt Mill Road.

We will also be working in Main Street in downtown Carrboro to repair some of the sewer lines in that corridor. That work will likely take place in 2022, but OWASA will hold community engagement sessions later this year to make sure the community is informed of the project.

An OWASA contractor recently completed work replacing the water line on Bolinwood Drive at the bridge over Bolin Creek. The water line was damaged in previous flooding during Hurricane Florence. This repair was carried out in partnership with FEMA. Additional neighborhood water line replacement projects are also underway.

A [new map on the OWASA website](#) shows where Capital Improvement Projects are planned and under construction across the service area.

OWASA Quarterly Report

August 26, 2021

Page 7

We would be happy to provide you more detailed information on the items above or other topics of interest as desired. Please feel free to contact our Executive Director, Todd Taylor (ttaylor@owasa.org or 919-537-4216), or me.

Sincerely,



Jo Leslie Eimers, Chair
OWASA Board of Directors

Attachments

cc: Mr. Richard White III, Carrboro Town Manager
Ms. Bonnie Hammersley, Orange County Manager
Mr. Maurice Jones, Chapel Hill Town Manager
OWASA Board of Directors
Todd Taylor, OWASA Executive Director

MONTHLY SUMMARY OF CALLS AND E-MAILS TO OWASA
FROM NEIGHBORS REPORTING ODOR
FROM THE MASON FARM WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
January	11	3	9	0	8	3	8	1	3	3	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	7	5	2	0	8	0	4	1	0	3	3	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
March	9	0	7	1	10	4	1	1	0	2	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	9	2	4	0	9	3	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	6	0	2	5	8	3	2	5	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
June	4	1	1	1	5	1	8	8	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
July	1	0	2	0	0	2	6	3	2	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
August	1	0	4	3	11	2	9	0	1	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	-
September	2	5	2	2	9	3	1	1	5	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	-
October	2	6	1	1	8	8	2	0	3	3	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
November	0	0	1	7	2	6	7	1	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
December	3	3	2	5	8	10	2	1	1	6	3	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	-
TOTAL	55	25	37	25	86	45	51	23	23	30	27	11	17	3	0	2	3	0	1	0

January-2002 to December-2020 History and Present (2021)

An “odor event” is defined as: One or more odor reports received during a 24 hour period from WWTP neighbor(s). Each odor event shall be considered to be “verified” unless OWASA determines conclusively that an alternative source other than the WWTP created the odor.

**LOG OF CALLS AND E-MAILS TO OWASA
FROM NEIGHBORS REPORTING ODOR IN THE MASON FARM
WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT (WWTP) AREA**

January 2021 – July 2021

Date call received	Time call received	Location
January 2021	No Reported Odors	N/A
February 2021	No Reported Odors	N/A
March 2021	No Reported Odors	N/A
April 2021	No Reported Odors	N/A
May 2021	No Reported Odors	N/A
June 2021	No Reported Odors	N/A
July 2021	No Reported Odors	N/A
August 2021	-	-
September 2021	-	-
October 2021	-	-
November 2021	-	-
December 2021	-	-

DISTRIBUTION OF OWASA E-MAILS ABOUT OFF-SITE ODOR ELIMINATION

Location	Name
Highland Woods	Paul Neebe
	Mary Turner
	Malcolm Forbes
	Natalia Lebedeva
	Gary Richman
	Gail Wood
	Robert and Melissa Porter
	Robin Casey
	Joseph Clancy
	Ann Schwab
	Seth Kingsbury
	Amanda Kingsbury
	Freeman and Angela Kirby
	Reed Johnson
	Kay Johnson
	Rex Bartles
	Lisa Bartles
	Ann Alexander
	Nortin Hadler
	Carol Hadler
	Frank P. Rexford
	Scott Brees
	Kendall Brees
	Rainer Blaesius
	Elisabeth Schweins
	Susannah Shearer
	Fred Hall
	Lawanda Rainey-Hall
	Katie Jamieson
	Richard Harrill
	Angel Smith
	Jordon Sharome
	Cameron Williams
Marian Rice	
Janet McLamb	
Michael Henning	
Benjamin Duan-Porter	
Matthew Mauck	
Finley Forest	Adam Kimplead
	Cindy Underwood
	Dan Puckett
	David J. Polewka
	Kathryn Conard
Laurel Hill	Michael Sharpe
	Julie Maness
	Bob Wendell
	Carol David

Location	Name		
St. Thomas More Church and School Morgan Creek area	Pat Evans Ewan Rodewald and Sharon Hodge Marcella Grendler Kay Goldstein Ann Wilson Louis Fogleman St. Thomas More Church staff		
	Ellen Johnson Aldersgate United Methodist Church Betsy Malpass Hanson Malpass Jeannie Cox Laura King Moore Jeanne Langley AW Carr Marilyn and Don Hartman		
	Ronald McDonald House Family House	Robert Huls Shelly Day Greg Kirkpatrick, Executive Director Janice Ross, Operations Manager	
		Matt Hapgood Steve McPhail James F. Howard Steven and Susan Frye Doug Longman Barbara and Edward Paradise Jeanne and David Jarrett Nadine O'Malley Mark Witcher Ralph Abrahams Kathy Abrahams	
	Reserve	William Ware Johnny Randall, NC Botanical Garden Jennifer Peterson, NC Botanical Garden Phil Barner, Energy Services Director Margaret Holton, Water, Sewer & Stormwater Coordinator Mary Beth Koza, Director, Environment, Health and Safety Ross Fowler, Finley Golf Course Michael Wilkinson, golf pro Andrew Sapp, Men's Golf Coach UNC Tennis Center UNC parking Mike McFarland, University Communications Scott Ragland, News Services Linda Convisor, Director of Local Relations UNC Farm (Faculty Staff Recreation Association) Frank Maynard, Athletics/ Finley Golf Course	
		Bayberry Drive area UNC	

Distribution of OWASA E-mails About Off-Site Odor Elimination

Page 3

Location	Name
	Robert Costa, Athletics/ Finley Golf Course
	Mark Steffer, Athletics/ Finley Golf Course
	Jeff McCracken, Public Safety
	Kate Luck
UNC Healthcare	Mel Hurston
	Karen McCall
	Keith Morris
Town of Chapel Hill	Maurice Jones, Town Manager
	Ann Anderson, Town Attorney
	Lance Norris, Public Works Director
	Chris Roberts, Town Engineer
	Richard Terrell, Public Works Operations Superintendent
	Jeanne Brown, Assistant to the Mayor
	Sheila Stains-Ramp, Development Services Planning
	Sabrina Oliver, Town Clerk
	Amy Harvey, Public Affairs and Communications
	Chris Blue, Police Chief
	Bryan Walker, Captain/Police Information
	Josh Mecimore, Police Information Officer
	Allison Weakley
	Kiel Harms
	Ran Northam, Interim Communications Manager
	Ross Tompkins
City Schools	Bill Mullin
	Todd LoFrese, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services
	Jeff Nash, Community Relations
	Crystal Jones
	Chris Liles
	Darlene Ryan
Other Utilities	Indira Everett, Duke Energy
	Brenda Duke, Duke Energy
	Steve Small, Duke Energy
	Billy Miller, PSNC
	Time Warner Cable
Orange County	Orange 911 Center Supervisor on duty
	Connie Pixley, Environmental Health Supervisor
Other	Bill Ferrell, Meadowmont Community Association
	Chamber of Commerce
	Michael Hughes
	Post Office

**SUMMARY OF ON-SITE HYDROGEN SULFIDE (H₂S)
ODOR MONITORING**

Month and year	Headworks Monitor			UNC Monitor			Digester Monitor			Switchgear Monitor		
	Average H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Minimum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Maximum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Average H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Minimum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Maximum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Average H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Minimum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Maximum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Average H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Minimum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)	Maximum H ₂ S Reading (ppm)
April 2021	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ¹	0.0009	0.0000	0.0112 ²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ³	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁴
May 2021	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁵	0.0010	0.0005	0.0357 ⁶	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁷	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁸
June 2021	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁹	0.0009	0.0000	0.0107 ¹⁰	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ¹¹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ¹²

Monitor Locations:

Headworks Monitor (#1) – Monitor located at Headworks Facility.

Digester Monitor (#2) – Monitor located between Digester #1 and Digester #4.

UNC Monitor (#3) – Monitor located at Primary Sludge PS.

Switchgear Monitor (#4) – Monitor located at Switchgear Building.

¹ Maximum reading zero all of April 2021

² Maximum reading recorded on April 6, 2021

³ Maximum reading zero all of April 2021

⁴ Maximum reading zero all of April 2021

⁵ Maximum reading zero all of May 2021

⁶ Maximum reading recorded on May 24, 2021

⁷ Maximum reading zero all of May 2021

⁸ Maximum reading zero all of May 2021

⁹ Maximum reading zero all of June 2021

¹⁰ Maximum reading recorded on June 28, 2021

¹¹ Maximum reading zero all of June 2021

¹² Maximum reading zero all of June 2021