



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.

October 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 August 2021. This report includes information on the following items:

- Standard Collection Practices
- COVID-19 Vaccination Rate and Policies
- Strategic Plan
- Diversity & Inclusion
- OWASA Board Membership
- New Website Tools
- Forest Management
- Long-Range Water Supply Plan
- Care to Share Day
- Key Infrastructure Investments

Standard Collection Practices:

Orange County's local State of Emergency related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been extended indefinitely. Using the local State of Emergency as guidance, OWASA has deferred resuming standard bill collection practices for residential customers. Currently, OWASA has about 580 individually metered residential customers who are past due on their bill. The average amount past due is about \$435.

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. Once we resume standard collection practices, OWASA will be actively promoting fee-free payment plans of up to 18 months to customers who are past due.

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 late December 2021/January 2022.



OWASA has been monitoring the situation and communicating with customers who are past due on their accounts to encourage them to seek assistance from various resources to pay down any balances, including OWASA's Care to Share bill-assistance program. Information about these various funding resources has also been kept up to date on OWASA's website throughout the pandemic, including Orange County Emergency Housing Assistance and the NC HOPE Program when funding has been available.

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

COVID-19 Vaccination Rate and Policies:

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 of October 22, roughly 86% of OWASA employees have provided proof of vaccination to Human Resources. Employees who have not provided proof of vaccination are required to submit weekly COVID-19 test results in order to continue to be authorized to report to work.

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

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.

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

Strategic Plan:

OWASA has begun a process to update our strategic plan. A new strategic plan will help guide OWASA investments and priorities for OWASA Board and staff over the next 5-6 years.

Since August 2021, OWASA has held stakeholder engagement sessions and conducted surveys of OWASA's community, Board, and employees to gather feedback on areas of focus for OWASA.

The feedback received through these outreach methods is being analyzed, and the OWASA Board of Directors will be discussing this feedback and next steps during work sessions in November and December 2021.

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

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 September 9, 2021. Diversity and Inclusion updates are provided to the Board three times per year, with the September update serving as the comprehensive annual report which includes the annual Equal Employment Opportunity report.

Key initiatives of the Diversity and Inclusion Program from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, include mandating Diversity and Inclusion training for all employees, observing Juneteenth as an official OWASA holiday, presenting about OWASA's diversity and inclusion efforts at national conferences, joining the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, participating in career fairs focused on recruiting underrepresented populations, introducing gender-neutral bathroom signage where possible, and offering menstrual products in restrooms.

Since 2015, the racial minority representation in our workforce has increased from 20.8% to 25.6% and female representation has increased from 20.8% to 24.8%.

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 September 2021 Board update](#).

OWASA Board Membership:

There remain two openings on the OWASA Board of Directors: 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, updating the Long-Range Water Supply Plan, and developing 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 to recruit new applicants.

OWASA embraces diversity and inclusion in everything we do, and we encourage all interested candidates to apply for Board Member appointments. Our Board addresses a wide range of issues. The only 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.

New Website Tools:

Three new maps and a PFAS monitoring dashboard have been added to OWASA's website to provide important updates to customers and answers to some frequently asked questions.

Customers can get up-to-date information on any [water outage or precautionary Boil Water Advisory](#) through one of the newly created maps. This map will be updated any time OWASA customers are experiencing a loss in service as part of our standard notification process.

OWASA's construction crew and contractors are active across the service area making improvements to piping and other equipment. Customers can stay up to date on projects by viewing a new map on the website that shows [where crews are working now and what projects are coming in the near future](#).

Additionally, a new map shows [OWASA's general service area](#). You can type in an address to see if the address is in the service area. The map does not guarantee that OWASA's services are already available at that location. As you know, not everyone in the overall service area is currently connected to OWASA's services.

Additionally, OWASA has recently published a dashboard showing results from our ongoing, proactive [PFAS Monitoring Program](#).

Forest Management:

OWASA owns about 2,400 acres of forest lands, much of which is for protecting water quality in the Cane Creek Reservoir, the primary drinking water source for the Carrboro-Chapel Hill-southern Orange County communities.

The OWASA Board authorized staff in September 2019 to implement the Forest Management Program on OWASA-owned lands in accordance with the Board-approved vision, guiding principles, and management strategies.

OWASA entered a contract in November 2020 for forest management activities on 77 acres on Meadow Crest South and Meadow Crest North as part of the Forest Stewardship Plans finalized for those tracts in September 2020. We anticipate work to be completed on these tracts by the end of September 2022.

A prescribed burn was conducted by the North Carolina Forest Service on 83 acres at OWASA's Mitigation Tract in April 2021. The prescribed burn was focused on promoting oak and hickory

regeneration after an original thinning in 2014. The Fiscal Year 2022 budget includes funding to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan for our 187-acre Teer West property on Flatrock Road. Management activities are planned for the Mitigation Tract, including a 24-acre timber sale, road maintenance, additional fire break construction, precommercial thinning, and another prescribed burn scheduled for April 2022. In addition to promoting healthy forests, OWASA's prescribed burns reduce the risks of uncontrolled wildfires.

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 a subset of alternatives to secure the community's allocation of water from Jordan Lake. Once that analysis is complete, the guiding principles will be applied to all viable water supply alternatives.

Before making any final decisions on OWASA's Long-Range Water Supply Plan, OWASA will again engage the community. We will work collaboratively with our community partners to ensure that our customers have high-quality, sustainable water resources for generations.

Care to Share Day:

Care to Share is one resource available to OWASA customers who are behind on their bill, in addition to state and federal funding being made available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

OWASA will once again celebrate Care to Share Day on November 18, 2021. The annual event aims to raise awareness of and funds for OWASA's bill-assistance program Care to Share, which is administered in partnership with the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service.

These communication efforts will include using OWASA's Wonderful Water segment on WCHL to promote the event as well as information on OWASA's website and social media channels. OWASA will be reaching out to our local government partners to help spread the word throughout the community.

OWASA is grateful for the continued collaboration with our local government partners in assisting our community through this work.

Key Infrastructure Investments:

OWASA has made progress on several critical infrastructure projects since August 2021 and has new 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). Of these projects, the

work to improve chemical facilities and our finished water pumping system is largely complete but additional water line work is ongoing. Work has taken place largely on the WTP site to date but did begin to move into the roadway in Jones Ferry Road in October. These water line improvements will add redundancy and increase 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 application process are underway for electrical system improvements at the WTP; construction on this project is likely to begin in the summer of 2022.

OWASA recently awarded the construction contract for the second phase of the West Cameron Avenue water line replacement project. Construction is expected to begin this fall and carry into fall of 2022. The initial phase of the project was completed last year in the intersection of West Cameron Avenue and Columbia Street. Phase 2 will take place roughly from Pittsboro Street to Merritt Mill Road.

A project repairing and replacing sewer lines in downtown Carrboro along East Main Street will begin construction in early 2022. OWASA has been working closely with the businesses and residents along this corridor in advance of construction and will hold an additional community engagement session prior to work commencing to share additional information with the community about the project.

OWASA construction crews are also making progress on several smaller water line replacement projects in neighborhoods across the service area.

We would be happy to provide 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
Board of Directors

Attachments

cc: Ms. Bonnie Hammersley, Orange County Manager
Mr. Maurice Jones, Chapel Hill Town Manager
Mr. Richard White III, Carrboro Town Manager
OWASA Board of Directors
Todd Taylor, P.E., 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	0
September	2	5	2	2	9	3	1	1	5	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	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	No Reported Odors	N/A
September 2021	No Reported Odors	N/A
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	
		Reserve	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
	Bayberry Drive area UNC		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

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

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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
	Florentine A. Miller, Deputy 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)
July 2021	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ¹	0.0009	0.0000	0.0293 ²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ³	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁴
August 2021	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁵	0.0010	0.0005	0.0103 ⁶	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁷	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁸
September 2021	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁹	0.0010	0.0000	0.1040 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 July 2021

² Maximum reading recorded on July 18, 2021

³ Maximum reading zero all of July 2021

⁴ Maximum reading zero all of July 2021

⁵ Maximum reading zero all of August 2021

⁶ Maximum reading recorded on August 28, 2021

⁷ Maximum reading zero all of August 2021

⁸ Maximum reading zero all of August 2021

⁹ Maximum reading zero all of September 2021

¹⁰ Maximum reading recorded on September 16, 2021

¹¹ Maximum reading zero all of September 2021

¹² Maximum reading zero all of September 2021