



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 22, 2023

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

Mayor Damon Seils
Town of Carrboro
301 West Main Street
Carrboro, NC 27510

Chair Jamezetta Bedford
Orange County Board of
Commissioners
Post Office Box 8181
Hillsborough, NC 27278

Dear Mayor Hemminger, Mayor Seils, and Chair Bedford:

We are pleased to submit this report on our services, projects, and initiatives since April 2023. This report includes information on the following items:

1. PFAS updates
2. Lead and Copper Rule Revisions
3. Fiscal Year 2024 Approved Budget
4. Western Intake Partnership
5. Water Quality Report Card: June 2023
6. Capital Improvement Project Briefs
7. Diversity and Inclusion
8. Partnership for Safe Water Awards
9. Board Updates

Proposed new PFAS Regulations:

On March 14, 2023, the EPA announced new proposed regulations for six PFAS in drinking water. If implemented by the end of the year as expected, OWASA will be required to meet these regulations by the end of 2028.

We have engaged a consultant to assist our work in this area and are evaluating what water treatment process modifications can be made in the short term to reduce PFAS levels in our drinking water. The consultant will also advise on the best long-term treatment strategy for OWASA to meet the PFAS requirements. The long-term solution is expected to involve a five-year, \$50 million capital project.

We continue to post routine PFAS monitoring results [to our website](#). We will also provide updates to the community as the regulations are finalized, our work progresses, and additional information becomes available. Staff are developing a comprehensive communications plan for PFAS that will include education through web and social media, direct channels for PFAS communication, community meetings, and partnerships in outreach. This plan is expected to be complete by December 2023.



Lead and Copper Rule Revisions:

OWASA's team and consultant are continuing work to meet regulations of the EPA's revised Lead and Copper Rule. The compliance date for the new rule is October 2024. OWASA continues to remain in full compliance with the EPA's existing Lead and Copper Rule.

OWASA has completed an initial lead service line inventory, and we are working to add to the information that we have available from historical records and internal data. Additionally, OWASA is proactively working to identify unknown service line materials throughout our service area. We will be publicizing information about this inventory to our community as these efforts progress.

We continue offering free lead and copper testing to customers. We collaborate with customers making these requests to acquire more verifiable information on the material that makes up their service line (the line which connects their household plumbing to the OWASA meter).

Members of the OWASA team also continue working with officials at UNC-Chapel Hill as the University is investigating the cause of lead detection at certain fountains and fixtures on campus. OWASA is assisting with technical information and guidance to UNC and the public through our website, including ensuring the public is aware that the lead detection at these fixtures is not indicative of the presence of lead in the community's drinking water.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget:

OWASA's Board of Directors approved the organization's Fiscal Year 2024 budget. OWASA is committed to providing a high level of service to our customers, and we regularly look for cost-saving opportunities. Financially, there are a few challenges in the year ahead.

Approximately half of OWASA's annual budget is invested in making improvements to the community's water and sewer system, primarily to repair and replace existing infrastructure and ensure the reliability and resiliency of water and sewer services in the community. The other half is used for the operations and maintenance of the entire system and to ensure that our essential services are available around-the-clock to serve the community. OWASA is exclusively funded by the rates and fees charged for services.

Drinking water use by the community for the last several years has been about the same as it was 30 years ago, while the number of customers OWASA serves has grown by more than 80% over the same time-period. This remarkable achievement is beneficial to the community in many ways; however, with costs increasing and sales volume remaining flat, there is pressure to raise rates on water and sewer services in order to pay for expenses and invest in maintaining OWASA's system. The FY24 budget includes funding for some of these projects for which further delay could be costly and/or detrimental to utility operations. Additionally, inflation and supply chain issues, while beginning to ease, are impacting many costs associated with OWASA's operations – including construction costs and chemicals and materials vital to providing our services to the community in a safe and effective manner.

The FY24-28 capital investments program (CIP) budget includes investments necessary for meeting the EPA's new proposed PFAS regulations; we project that we will need to spend approximately \$50 million over the next five years to comply. This \$50 million investment is about one-third of the capital investment expenditure planned for the next five years.

To be able to meet the financial needs for FY24 and beyond, the FY24 budget includes a 9% increase in monthly drinking water and sewer rates. The new rates go into effect on October 1, 2023.

Western Intake Partnership:

The Western Intake Partnership (WIP) includes OWASA, the City of Durham, the Town of Pittsboro, and Chatham County. The partners propose to build a new intake on the western side of Jordan Lake, a new water treatment plant, and transmission lines and pump stations. The goal is to have the facilities operational by 2031. The OWASA Board of Directors received an update on the project at its [April 13, 2023 meeting](#).

OWASA staff and General Counsel continue to work with the other partners to develop a draft Interlocal Agreement that will specify how the partnership will work when the facilities are being constructed and operational.

The partners are using the [Envision](#) framework, which helps project teams identify sustainable, resilient, and equitable approaches during planning, design, and construction that will carry forward to operations and maintenance. The WIP project is in the early stages, and OWASA will continue providing updates to the community as it progresses.

OWASA's involvement with the WIP to this point includes investing in planning, permitting, and design projects to access water from Jordan Lake. As part of this limited partnership, the Jordan Lake water treatment facility and other project components may be built on OWASA-owned property in Chatham County.

Water Quality Report Card:

OWASA met all state and federal drinking water regulations during the 2022 calendar year. The annual water quality report card, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), provides details on where our community's water comes from, how OWASA treats drinking water to meet regulatory standards, and how we can all work together to protect our vital natural resources. Highlights of the report card were sent by mail to all customers in June.

In this year's report card, you can also learn more about the OWASA team working to serve customers every day and our commitment to protecting and supplying reliable and high-quality drinking water for decades to come.

Key Infrastructure Investments:

Several large projects in the community's water and wastewater infrastructure are underway with others recently completed or soon to begin.

OWASA's contractors have completed several gravity sewer rehabilitation projects throughout the service area to renew and rehabilitate pipes and manholes. At the Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant facilities, projects are underway to improve treatment and increase reliability.

Throughout the service area, OWASA construction crews are making progress on several smaller water line replacement projects in neighborhoods. During this reporting period, OWASA's crews have completed a water line replacement project along Oakwood Drive in Chapel Hill and expect to complete work in the Scarlett-Cooper neighborhood by September.

Significant work on planning and design for projects scheduled for construction in the coming reporting periods was also completed this quarter. You can track the status of OWASA's capital projects in the field through a dynamic map [on the OWASA website](#).

Diversity and Inclusion:

Promoting diversity and inclusion is a top priority for OWASA, which has had an active Diversity and Inclusion Program since 2016. Diversity and Inclusion was also identified as an OWASA value in the Strategic Plan adopted in the fall of 2022.

We began the recruitment process for the Diversity and Inclusion Specialist position and the position was filled on August 21, 2023, which is the first position at OWASA focused solely on diversity and inclusion. Internal diversity working groups are continuing their evaluation of OWASA's Diversity and Inclusion Program and how to grow these efforts in the future. Training for all employees took place in May.

Partnership for Safe Water Awards:

OWASA received three awards in June from the Partnership for Safe Water for its performance in calendar year 2022: 10-Year Excellence in Water Treatment; Five-Year Presidents Award for Distribution System Operations; and 10-Year Directors Award for Distribution System Operations. These awards were presented to OWASA at AWWA's ACE 23 Conference in Toronto, CA. More information on these awards is available [here](#).

OWASA Board Updates:

OWASA is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors and currently has eight members. Chapel Hill-appointee Kevin Leibel stepped down when his term ended on June 30.

At the Board's June meeting, Board Secretary Ray Dubose was honored for two full terms of distinguished service on the Board. Elmira Mangum was elected Secretary by the Board and Mel Kramer was elected Vice Chair.

Two new Board members were appointed in June and took their Oath of Office in July: Kim Piracci, representing Orange County, and Kyle Onda representing Chapel Hill. This leaves one vacant seat on the board to be appointed by the Town of Chapel Hill.

We appreciate your interest and action in appointing Board members as we continue critical work in the months ahead. OWASA embraces diversity and inclusion in everything we do, and we would like to encourage all interested candidates to apply for Board appointments. The only qualification needed is a commitment to serve the community.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Boehm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bruce Boehm, Chair
Board of Directors

Attachments

cc: Mr. Chris Blue, Chapel Hill Town Manager
Ms. Bonnie Hammersley, Orange County Manager
Mr. Richard White, III, Carrboro 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

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	3	9	0	8	3	8	1	3	3	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	5	2	0	8	0	4	1	0	3	3	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
March	0	7	1	10	4	1	1	0	2	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
April	2	4	0	9	3	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	0	2	5	8	3	2	5	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
June	1	1	1	5	1	8	8	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
July	0	2	0	0	2	6	3	2	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
August	0	4	3	11	2	9	0	1	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
September	5	2	2	9	3	1	1	5	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	
October	6	1	1	8	8	2	0	3	3	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
November	0	1	7	2	6	7	1	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
December	3	2	5	8	10	2	1	1	6	3	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
TOTAL	25	37	25	86	45	51	23	23	30	27	11	17	3	0	2	3	0	1	0	1	0

January-2003 to December-2023 History and Present (2023)

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.

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

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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	Chris Blue, Town Manager
	Loryn Clark, Deputy Town Manager
	Ann Anderson, Town Attorney
	Lance Norris, Public Works Director
	Richard Terrell, Public Works Assistant Director
	Chris Roberts, Public Works, Manager of Engineering & Infrastructure
	Jeanne Brown, Mayoral Aide
	Sheila Stains-Ramp, Development Services Planning
	Sabrina Oliver, Town Clerk
	Amy Harvey, Deputy Town Clerk
	Celisa Lehew, Police Chief
	Bryan Walker, Captain/Police Information
	Josh Mecimore, Police – Emergency Management Capitan
	Allison Weakley, Public Works
	Christina Strauch, Public Information Officer
	Ross Tompkins, Assistant to the Town Manager
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 2023	0.0027	0.0000	0.1392 ¹	0.0006	0.0000	0.0020 ²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ³	0.0007	0.0000	0.0752 ⁴
May 2023	0.0015	0.0000	0.0361 ⁵	0.0008	0.0003	0.0020 ⁶	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ⁷	0.0008	0.0005	0.0249 ⁸
June 2023	0.0201	0.0000	0.0342 ⁹	0.0009	0.0006	0.0142 ¹⁰	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000 ¹¹	0.0025	0.0000	0.0283 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 recorded on April 6, 2023

² Maximum reading recorded on April 26, 2023

³ Maximum reading zero all of April 2023

⁴ Maximum reading recorded on April 30, 2023

⁵ Maximum reading recorded on May 21, 2023

⁶ Maximum reading recorded on May 1, 2023

⁷ Maximum reading zero all of May 2023

⁸ Maximum reading recorded on May 30, 2023

⁹ Maximum reading recorded on June 29, 2023

¹⁰ Maximum reading recorded on June 2, 2023

¹¹ Maximum reading zero all of June 2023

¹² Maximum reading recorded on June 1, 2023