



VOLUME 27 | ISSUE #8
AUGUST 2017

CUSTOMER UPDATE



FEATURING: BOTTLED WATER VS TAP WATER

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OPU MEMO



Jenny Heimerman,
Supervisor, Customer
Care

OPU Commission

Mr. Kim Cosen
Mr. Dale E. Simon
Mr. Matt Kottke
Mr. Kent Rossi
Mr. Randy Doyal

In an effort to continually improve the overall customer experience, we reach out to the community through a customer satisfaction survey every other year. This survey is conducted by phone and reaches 350 OPU customers. In reviewing the results, the survey lists great things the community has to say about OPU, along with opportunities for improvement. These results have helped OPU develop key goals and continue our overall mission of delivering excellence.

The overall satisfaction rating came in at a pleasing 89%! This indicates, 89% of the surveyed customers, rated their overall satisfaction of OPU an 8 or better on a 10-point scale. Although this overall rating is good, we have opportunities to reach excellence.

In 2015, results indicated OPU had an opportunity to improve energy conservation programs, or at least, make sure the community knew more about them. Our efforts of offering more rebates and making sure we communicate them in newsletters and on our website has paid off. The rating for Energy Conservation Programs increased seven percentage points in 2017!

In the Customer Service department, we have really focused on responsiveness to our customers. We put key performance indicators in place on how quickly phones are answered and our availability in the office. Consistency in providing excellent service has also been a key focus for the team. These efforts have also paid off. The survey reflected a seven percentage point increase in overall satisfaction with

a Customer Service Representative, which moved the rating to the top at 100%!

Although the satisfaction rating increased by six percent for the home energy report, we still have work to do. We will be taking a look at the benefits and savings the report provides the community.

Along with the home energy report focus, the survey indicated more communication is needed on how OPU is involved in the community. Being a public entity, OPU is not allowed to sponsor teams for sporting events or any type of fundraising event. There are other ways OPU is involved in the community and we will be sharing those in future newsletters.

In addition to this survey, it is important we understand how we are doing in every interaction with our customers. A quick survey can be found on our website at www.owatonnautilities.com/customersurvey. This short, five question, survey gives customers an opportunity to provide us with immediate feedback about their experience via phone, a visit to our office or email. I invite you to jump on the site and try out the survey today!

Overall, it's important we not only meet your expectations, but exceed them. Please feel free to contact me at any time, for any reason.

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Reduce the amount of water your yard needs by fully saturating the soil when you sprinkle. Applying 1" of water to your yard ensures full saturation of the soil, promoting deeper root growth and a healthier lawn that needs less water. Applying more than 1" increases water runoff. Consider using a rain gauge when sprinkling to help conserve water.

Go to www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips for more conservation tips.



CITY SPOT

HIGHLIGHTING: ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

OWATONNA CITY COUNCIL

"Clean H2Owatonna" is the City of Owatonna's Stormwater Management Program comprised of various program elements and activities designed to reduce stormwater pollution and eliminate prohibited non-stormwater discharges through a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) municipal stormwater discharge permit. Mandated by Congress under the Clean Water Act, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II is a national program for addressing sources of stormwater discharges, which adversely affect the quality of our nation's waters.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) administers three major sectors that regulate stormwater including the Municipal (MS4) Stormwater, Industrial Stormwater, and Construction Stormwater. Stormwater runoff is traditionally targeted as the leading cause of water pollution. Therefore, the most involved stormwater permit the City holds with the MPCA is the MS4 Permit, which stands for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit.

This permit is required for any stormwater conveyance system owned and operated by a public entity and not combined with sanitary sewer. The MS4's under regulation are those which have a population of 10,000 or more, those with population of 5,000 or more but have been determined to have potential to discharge to special/impaired waters, those with jurisdiction wholly located in another MS4 or urbanized area and those partially located in an MS4 or urbanized area but with potential of population capacity of 1,000 or more.

All MS4s under regulation (those requiring the 5-year permit with the MPCA), are subject to 6 Minimum Control Measures. The City has developed a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) to address the 6 Minimum Control Measures, providing SOPs, ERPs, timelines, and measurable goals for each minimum control measures. Carrying out activities to meet the requirements of the MS4 Permit is one of the major uses of the Stormwater Utility Fund.

6 Minimum Control Measures:

- Public Education and Outreach
- Public Participation and Involvement
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
- Construction Site Stormwater Runoff Control
- Post Construction Stormwater Management
- Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations

Assisting with the Initiative

- Install a rain garden, rain barrel, pervious pavers, native garden/buffer or plant a few trees
- Practice good housekeeping and best management practices at your own home when using chemicals such as fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, detergents, deicers, etc.
- Take a walk in your neighborhood and remove garbage, yard waste and debris from catch basins and curb lines
- Visit a nearby stormwater treatment system (ponds, rain gardens, filtration basin, etc.) and remove garbage, weeds, and other debris
- Remember to keep yard waste out of the street, especially when mowing
- Wash your car in a grassed/buffered area
- Contain all liquid wastes during vehicle maintenance, dispose of properly
- Remove any junk or debris from your yard that is exposed to weather
- Report suspected pollution
- Encourage your family and friends to get out on the water and enjoy the beauty of our natural resources

MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss

Getting Involved to Better Your Community

Residents are strongly encouraged to explore one of many opportunities to make a difference in the community and have a positive impact on the quality of surrounding waterways. The City of Owatonna currently offers, supports and promotes the following public participation and involvement programs:

- Rain Garden Cost Share Program
- OPU Rain Barrel Rebate Program
- Adopt a Rain Garden Program
- Adopt a Catch Basin Program
- Storm Drain Stenciling Program
- Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up Event

Please contact Brad Rademacher, Water Quality/Stormwater Specialist at 507-774-7300 or Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us if you are interested in participating. Visit www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater for more information.



BOTTLED VS TAP

The information for this article was obtained from a 2011 Consumer Reports article.

Blame it on convenience, laziness, or marketing brilliance but U.S. sales of bottled water are on the rise, inching up 3.5 percent in 2010 after having dropped in recent years, to \$6.4 billion a year, according to industry figures. That despite some increasingly unflattering revelations—chief among them that many brands don't even reveal where the water comes from.

Wanted: Clearer labeling

In a report released in early 2011, the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization, analyzed the labels and company websites of 173 bottled waters and found that about one-fifth, including big brands Aquafina and Crystal Geyser, didn't list their source. Another one-third didn't say how the water was treated. Many popular brands, such as Poland Spring, list multiple sources (in its case, springs in Maine), leaving consumers to guess which one produced their H2O. Only three brands—Gerber Pure Purified Water, Nestle Pure Life Purified Water, and Penta Ultra-Purified Water—got the group's highest marks for disclosing source and treatment information and using the most advanced treatment methods.

Some brands might not disclose their source because they don't have to. The Environmental Protection Agency requires community water systems to divulge the source of their drinking water in an annual Consumer Confidence Report. But bottled-water makers aren't required to disclose where their water comes from, how it was treated, or what contaminants it might contain. Disclosure is purely voluntary (except in California). And the bottled stuff is subject to a less stringent safety standard than tap water.

Bottom line. Don't be misled by crisp blue labels and mountain vistas. Purified tap water is the source of 49 percent of bottled water produced in the U.S., according to industry data. Many consumers could cut out the middleman (and produce far less plastic waste) by investing in a water filter and reusable water bottle to tote when they're on the go.

What to do

- Drink tap water. If you're concerned about its purity, get a water filter. Carafe or faucet-mounted models are the least expensive and remove many common contaminants. A reverse-osmosis filter removes more contaminants. Most cost hundreds of dollars, but there are excellent model from Whirlpool for \$150.
- Give everyone in the household a reusable water bottle that doesn't have bisphenol A, a chemical linked to reproductive problems.
- If you must buy bottled water, choose a brand that discloses its source and lists an advanced purification method on its label or website. Check EWG's brand analysis at www.ewg.org/bottled-water-2011-home.
- To learn more about your water, read the Consumer Confidence Report. You may obtain this report at www.owatonnautilities.com/consumerconfidence.

EQUIPMENT SERIES



Inside OPU's water towers, the water level goes up and down like an elevator.

OPU has six water towers plus an additional storage reservoir on the ground. The water towers each hold 500,000-750,000 gallons of water and the storage reservoir holds about one million gallons.

That sounds like a lot. But OPU delivers about three million gallons of water each day to the 10,000 homes and businesses we serve. So, on average, we refill the water towers and water storage reservoir every day. Frequent refilling also helps maintain the high quality of the water.

The water that goes into our storage units comes from eight wells that tap large underground reservoirs of water. Those reservoirs, which lie between 400 and 1,300 feet underground, are refilled by rain and melted snow. Depending on how far underground a reservoir is, it can take about 50 years for rain and melted snow to make its way through the dirt and rocks to reach the reservoir.

OPU built its first water tower in 1923, when only 7,500 people lived here. As our community has grown, we have added more water towers, the last one in 1996. Each well has a small building, measuring about 10 feet by 20 feet, that houses the pumps and chemicals needed to refill and treat the water.

OPU HIGHLIGHT



**Randall Doyal,
OPU Commissioner**

Randall Doyal, our newest commissioner, joined us in January of this year. As a 30+ year veteran of the ethanol fuel industry, he brings to the position a strong understanding of energy issues.

Randall is the general manager and CEO of Al-Corn Clean Fuel located in Claremont. He serves on several industry-related boards including the Minnesota Biofuels Association and the Renewable Fuels Association. He is also a founding governor and chairman of Renewable Products Marketing Group, one of the largest ethanol marketing companies in the U.S.

Randall and his wife of 42 years, Sonja, moved to Owatonna from New Mexico in 1995. They have two grown children who graduated from OHS.

Randall had the opportunity to work with OPU's management team a few years ago when Al-Corn was considering a pipeline to bring natural gas to their facility. Although the project with OPU did not materialize, he was impressed by the organization's pragmatic way of considering projects while making sure that existing customers would also benefit.

When Mayor Kuntz asked him to serve, Randall found it hard to say "no", and welcomed the opportunity to use his background to give back to the community he has enjoyed living in for 22 years.

Thank you, Randall, for joining our team!

CUSTOMER PORTAL

Ever wonder "Where did I put my utility statement?" or "I wonder what my consumption has been for the last six months?" Now this information is just a couple clicks away!

At owatonnautilities.com you will find a quick link at the top of the home page called **My Account**.



Simply create a user name and password and you'll be able to:

- View current or past statements
- Make a payment
- View consumption and cost history



CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Minnesota Law **REQUIRES** homeowners, do-it-yourselfers, excavators and contractors contact Gopher State One Call two business days prior to digging, driving stakes, or performing any other activities that involve disrupting the ground. **Never assume the depth of a utility or that the depth of the utilities are consistent.**

Gopher State One Call will contact the utility companies in the area to have underground lines marked. Once all utility lines are marked, digging may begin. Proceed with caution and avoid the tolerance zone or hand dig with a shovel within 2 feet of the marked utility lines.

Watch for private facilities such as sprinklers, power lines to garages or out buildings, gas grill lines or invisible fencing as these will not be located by Minnesota utility companies.

Visit gopherstateonecall.org to learn what information will need to be given when contacting Gopher State One Call.

The service is **FREE**. Call toll free at 800-252-1166 or simply dial 811.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**



Take Action for Water Quality in Your Community!

Visit the Cannon River Watershed Partnership and City of Owatonna Fair Booth

Take the opportunity to learn a little bit about what the CRWP and City of Owatonna has been working on as well as the opportunity to be comment and review the City of Owatonna's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan as part of the communities MS4 Program. The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan document will be available at the booth for you review! You may also review and comment by filling out a survey on the City's website at <http://ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater> Your input is greatly valued! Steele County Fair dates: August 15th – 20th, 2017

Save the Date - 9th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up

For the past 8 years, volunteers have combed the stream banks and waterways around Owatonna with the goal of cleaning trash and debris from the Straight River. With every passing year, more and more garbage is removed by hard working individuals and businesses who are dedicated to making a difference. Since 2009, residents of Owatonna and the surrounding cannon river watershed have volunteered cleaning up local creeks, the Cannon and Straight River.

The 9th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up will take place in Owatonna on **September 16th from 9am to 12 noon** at the Morehouse Park Pavilion. The event is hosted by the Cannon River Watershed Partnership, who helps to find sponsors and coordinate the clean-up event. After the event, all volunteers are provided lunch and an opportunity to share their big finds of the day.

Get Involved! If you are interested in helping visit www.crwp.net. If you'd like to support this event by being a sponsor contact Kristi Pursell at kristi@crwp.net Please come and join us to ensure our waters stay clean, safe and healthy!

For more information you may contact Brad Rademacher, Water Quality Specialist at 507-774-7300.

REBATES

Managing Moisture...

**Humidity
is only fun for her.**

Dry up with a rebate!



- Energy Star® Dehumidifiers up to \$40

**Guilt-free
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- Tank Water Heaters up to \$100
- Tankless Water Heaters up to \$250

Visit www.owatonnautilities.com to learn more and download rebate applications with complete terms and conditions.

CONSERVE & \$AVE®



INDICIA

P.O Box 800 208 S. Walnut Ave.
Owatonna, MN 55060

Office: 451-2480 Service: 451-1616

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Wednesday:

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Thursday:

8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Friday:

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday:

Closed

Payment Options

- Online at www.owatonnautilities.com
- Automatic Withdrawal; bank account or credit card
- Drive-up drop box located in the parking lot south of building
- Drop box locations at Cash Wise Grocery Store and HyVee Food Store
- Mail
- At Owatonna Public Utilities; cash, credit card, check or money order

Moving?

Remember to contact the Customer Service Department **ONE WEEK** prior to moving, 451-2480.



Tell Us How We're Doing

Your opinion matters to us. Please take a few minutes to tell us how we did by visiting our website at owatonnautilities.com/customersurvey or simply scan the QR code above.

From the Editors

We welcome your comments and suggestions for future issues. Feel free to give us a call at 451-2480 or send an email to schmolit@owatonnautilities.com.

August is National Water Quality Month

To learn more about the quality of your drinking water, visit us at:

[www.owatonnautilities.com/
ConsumerConfidence](http://www.owatonnautilities.com/ConsumerConfidence)

or call 507-451-2480 for a paper copy.

Gas Leak?

If you smell gas and can't find the source immediately, go to a neighbor's house and call OPU at 451-1616.



Don't turn electrical switches on or off or use a flashlight or telephone in the home, because an electrical spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion.