

Being Good Sewer Stewards by Richard Mestan

The Environmental Compliance & Protection Division recently published an article about our wastewater treatment facility, also known as the Water Reclamation Facility (WRF), on the MCBH website. But, did you know there is whole different system in place designed to transport our wastewater to the WRF? Well it's true, and chances are that when you're outdoors, it's right beneath your feet! It's called the sanitary sewer system (S3), and it consists of a network of subsurface service lines, collection pipes, and pumping stations designed to collect and transport everything that goes down your drains to the WRF.

Among the superb personnel here at MCBH are utility workers who operate and maintain the S3. They do a fantastic job, considering the plethora of things that get flushed down the toilet or poured down the drain. Items such as paper towels, "flushable" wipes, and other self-care products combine with oil and grease to form dense matter that's like a clogged artery for the S3. When this happens, the out-of-sight, out-of-mind sewage surfaces and becomes a serious hazard to people and the environment—a sewage spill.

In response to a sewage spill, teams of MCBH workers and heavy equipment work to clear the blockage. The procedure is labor intensive and costly to the government. Not only that, but the workers are exposed to additional occupational risks. See the above photo of the most recent blockage cleared from the S3 near Pancoast Place. It's a combination of "flushable" wipes, grease, and other unmentionables you can imagine.

We ask residents to dispose of items like "flushable" wipes, paper towels, cotton swabs, hair, trash, and hygiene products in the trash. Please do not dispose of any of those items down the toilet or sink. For a very entertaining read about our WRF, go to:

<https://www.mcbhawaii.marines.mil/News/News-Article-Display/Article/2107455/mcbhs-wastewater-treatment-plant/> .

Activity: Be good Sewer Stewards! Share your eco-friendly methods to dispose of used fats, oil, and grease (FOG). Post in the comments below. Check out the games and activities for kids at: <https://www.sacsewer.com/kids-corner> . Share copies of your kids' activities. Random drawings for prizes will be held when social distancing measures have been lifted.

Mālama i ka 'āina—care for and live in harmony with the land. Earth Day every day at MCBH!