



THE ENDEAVOR

A PUBLICATION OF THE STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

VOLUME XI, NUMBER 1

SERVING EL CERRITO, KENSINGTON, AND RICHMOND ANNEX

SPRING 2003

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Douglas C. Humphrey

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT

It shall be the mission of the Stege Sanitary District to plan and operate a safe, efficient, and economical wastewater collection and transfer system for the present and future customers of the District.

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Stege Celebrates 90 Years of Service

The Stege Sanitary District, one of the oldest special districts in California, will mark its 90th Anniversary this year at the City of El Cerrito's 4th of July celebration.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Western Contra Costa County was still largely orchards and hay fields, but soon things quickly started to change. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake sent refugees fleeing across the Bay and many decided the warmer weather



The first office of the Stege Sanitary District in 1913 was at Stege Junction at the corner of Potrero and San Pablo Avenues.

and the friendly neighbors of their temporary home would make a good place to permanently put down roots. The arrival of the railroad industry brought a new migration of residents. Shops and stores sprang up along the main roads of Stockton, San Pablo, and Fairmount Avenues. A new town settlement

grew at the intersection of Potrero and San Pablo Avenues and became known as "Stege Junction."

By 1913, the region had grown so much that civic-minded citizens started to look to the future and become concerned for the sanitary needs of the expanding population. In March of that year, 25 resident freeholders presented a petition for the formation of the Stege Sanitary District to the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors. An election held on May



The corner of Potrero and San Pablo Avenues today.

15, 1913 confirmed the formation of the special sanitary district and voted into office a Sanitary Assessor and five members of the Sanitary Board. The first meeting of the Stege Sanitary District Board was held on May 28, 1913, in the little town of Rust (now El Cerrito). Justice of the Peace William F. Huber was chosen the first Chairman of the Board. The boundaries of the district included portions of the San Pablo Rancho bounded on the west by the Richmond City limits, on the south by the dividing line between Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, and on the east on by the line dividing the Rancho El Sobrante and the San Pablo Rancho. The tax rate was established at 15 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation.

From the beginning, the district's sewer lines carried only wastewater, unlike most older systems that combined sewer and storm runoff. The original system discharged untreated wastewater directly into San Francisco Bay at Point Isabel. One outfall ran along Cypress Avenue from Stege Junction;

Continued on back

Richard Stege

In 1913, the newly formed Stege Sanitary District conducted business from a building at Stege Junction. There is a Stege Avenue in what is now Richmond and a school is named after the illusive pioneer. But just who was Stege?

The story of Richard Stege is an interesting one. You might even call it “ribbeting.”

Born in Germany in 1832, Stege left home at 14 to find his fortune. He never stopped looking. Sailor, grocer, gold miner, baker, restaurateur, innkeeper, fur trader, shopkeeper,

Stege tried them all, skipping from one trade to another, one country to another. Finally, in 1869, Richard Stege returned to California. In 1876, he married the widow of a man who had been caretaker, and then owner, of a 600-acre ranch that covered what is now El Cerrito, San Pablo, and Richmond.

The estate became the Stege Ranch and it is here that Richard Stege found his most unlikely, yet most profitable occupation — frog farmer. For more than two decades, Stege operated California’s largest and most successful frog ranch. From 1877 to 1898, he annually shipped about 15,000 frogs across the states and to Hawaii. At the same time, Stege welcomed three industries to his ranch — the California Cap Company, the Tonite Powder Works, and the Western Mineral Company. By the time he died, in 1898, Stege was broke, a victim of stiff competition from younger frog farmers and bad business advice. Stege’s lone survivor, his daughter Edith, was forced to sell what was left of the ranch and the mansion her adoptive father had built. The property was sold to Standard Oil Company, then to East Shore and Suburban Railway Company, which turned Stege’s gardens into the East Shore Park.



The mansion built by Richard Stege in the 1870s was torn down in the 1930s and the area was turned into East Shore Park.

Contra Costa County Historical Society

Point Isabel: Yesterday and Today

If you’ve visited the shore park at the Point Isabel lately, you’ve passed by the East Bay MUD Point Isabel wet weather treatment plant. Put into operation in 1997 as part of a comprehensive cooperative program to protect the environment of San Francisco Bay, the facility is on the site of a wastewater treatment plant built by Stege in 1955. The site was provided to East Bay MUD by Stege in 1979.

During dry weather, about 3 million gallons of wastewater flow daily through the 150 miles of the Stege Sanitary District sewer lines. At these times, the Point Isabel facility acts as a pumping or transfer station, directing the flow to the East Bay MUD wastewater treatment facility in Oakland at the foot of the Bay Bridge. Because of groundwater infiltration during heavy rainstorms, this volume of wastewater can swell to 40 million gallons a day. During these times, the Point Isabel station holds this excess volume, plus wastewater from Albany and North Berkeley, in eight storage tanks. When the flow is reduced, the surplus



Today, East Bay MUD operates a wet weather wastewater treatment plant at Point Isabel.

wastewater is pumped to the East Bay MUD Oakland facility.

During significant wet weather events, generally when rainfall exceeds one inch in a 24-hour period, the facility acts as a primary treatment plant. Wastewater is settled, disinfected, and discharged into the Bay. On average, the holding and treatment functions of the Point Isabel wet weather plant are called on 10-15 times a year.



The Stege Sanitary District’s Point Isabel primary wastewater treatment plant opened in 1955.

SPOTLIGHT ON EXCELLENCE

Stege Customers

On this, the 90th anniversary of the creation of the Stege Sanitary District, the Board of Directors, management, and staff would like to acknowledge the most important people in our district — our customers, each and every one. In 1913, residents of the area had the foresight to recognize the importance of establishing a special sanitary district that would guard their well-being and that of future residents. They voluntarily taxed themselves to accomplish this goal. Much has changed in the intervening years, but one thing has remained the same — the commitment of Stege customers to do what is best for their community. We honor that commitment by pledging to provide excellent service in the most fiscally responsible and prudent manner possible.

To learn more
about Stege, visit
www.stegesd.dst.ca.us.



How to Contact Stege

By phone: (510) 524-4667

By mail: Stege Sanitary District
7500 Schmidt Lane, PO Box 537
El Cerrito, CA 94530-0537

By email: staff@stegesd.dst.ca.us

Meeting Calendar

The Board of Directors of the Stege Sanitary District regularly meets on the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 PM at the District office at 7500 Schmidt Lane in El Cerrito. The public is invited to attend.

The Future of Stege

The cornerstone of Stege's future is the continued implementation of the Collection System Rehabilitation Program that was developed subsequent to the East Bay Inflow/Infiltration (I/I) Study in the 1980s. Stege will continue to make use of improved technology available for video assessment and digital documentation of its sewer infrastructure.

Stege staff will continue to look for innovative methods and improved technology that will improve the operations, maintenance, rehabilitation, and customer service it provides.

The District currently outsources the video assessment portion of its Rehabilitation Program. Staff is currently analyzing whether it may be more cost effective to perform video services with District staff and equipment. As a result, a Stege video truck may be coming soon to your neighborhood.

Stege staff will continue to look for innovative methods and improved technology that will improve the operations, maintenance, rehabilitation, and customer service it provides. Stege is proud of its history. As an innovator, Stege was recognized by California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) with the 1999 Innovation Award for its Video Enhancement and Predictive Failure Model, which is the basis of Stege's maintenance and rehabilitation programs.

Come See Us at the APWA Fair!

Stege will join with the City of El Cerrito to host an open house on May 22, 2003 in connection with American Public Works Association (APWA) week. From 3:30 – 5:30 P.M., Stege and the City will display equipment uses and have staff present to show you how equipment is operated and answer any questions.

The open house will take place at the end of Schmidt Lane, in the street adjacent to the City Recycling Center and the City's Corporation yard.

We hope to see you there!



Please Join Us at a Community Forum
To Answer Questions and Gather Input on the Proposed Rate Changes
Starting at 5:30 PM on Thursday, May 15, 2003
Stege Sanitary District Office – 7500 Schmidt Lane, El Cerrito

April 25, 2003

Dear Customer:

Why a Rate Increase Is Needed

After six years with no increase in sewer rates, Stege Sanitary District has found that it must now raise rates. The reasons are compelling: cost of inflation, “pay-as-you-go financing,” and the cost of ever-stricter regulations.

Modest Increase

Compared to other public services, wastewater collection is very low cost. Single-family residential customers currently pay \$7.44 per month (\$89.28 per year) for our service through their property tax bill. Under the proposed plan, rates would increase by 56¢ per month the first year, 60¢ the next year and 65¢ the following year to reach \$9.25 per month (\$111.00 per year). Thus, over the three-year period, your sewer bill would rise less than \$2 per month.

Rates Should Reflect the Cost of Service — Adjustment to Multi-Unit Rate

Since 1986, multi-unit apartments and other multi-unit residences have paid less per unit than single-family homes (\$66.72 per year for multi-units compared to \$89.28 per year for single-family). However, the cost of wastewater collection service for multi-units and single family homes was recently determined to be the same. Proposition 218 requires that rates reflect the actual costs, so the multi-unit rate will be adjusted to equal the single-family rate. Under the proposed plan, multi-unit rates would increase by \$1.19 per month the first year, \$1.25 the next year, and \$1.25 the following year to reach \$9.25 per month (\$111.00 per year).

Protecting Public Health and the Environment

When your household wastewater is drained or flushed, it doesn't just disappear. It is collected in an extensive system of pipelines, and pumped to a plant where it is treated, tested and discharged safely to the Bay—a service that is essential to public health and a healthy environment.

Quality Service Using Advanced Technology

The District is proud of its maintenance record. To prevent spills and leaks, the District's professional operators use advanced technology and cost-saving databases developed in-house. Pipelines are regularly video-inspected to assure that they are secure and leak-free. Computer mapping systems, mathematical modeling and maintenance tracking software help design and maintain our facilities. Technology helps assure that the system works reliably for you under all conditions, at all times.

The modest rate increases, totaling less than \$2 per month after three years for single family homes, will allow the District to continue providing exceptional service to you, our customer. If you have any questions about your sewer rates or service, please call our General Manager, Doug Humphrey, at (510) 524-4668, or join us at our community forum on May 15, 2003.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors

PLEASE JOIN US

Community Forum to answer your questions and gather community input on proposed rate changes (See letter on reverse side for details).

You're Invited

Thursday, **May 15**, 2003

5:30 pm at District Office

7500 Schmidt Lane, El Cerrito

If you have questions about your sanitary service or the proposed rate changes, please call (510) 524-4668.



STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT
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 El Cerrito, CA 94530-0537 (510) 524-4667

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COMMUNITY FORUM
MAY 15, 2003
Information Inside

STEGE CELEBRATES 90 YEARS OF SERVICE continued from page 1



A maintenance truck stands proudly parked in front of the new Stege headquarters on Schmidt Lane in this 1961 photo. Today, the district has two rodders and one hydro-jetter to clean and maintain 150 miles of sewer line.

the other ran along Central Avenue from San Pablo and Fairmont.

Old records show that periodic flushings of the sewer lines with fresh water were considered essential to their maintenance of the pipes. To that end, the Sunset View Cemetery donated 17 loads of water and 9,000 additional gallons was purchased from the Peoples Water Company for \$2.70.

Since the township of El Cerrito would not be established until four years later in 1917, the early district took on duties generally associated with city governments, not sanitary districts — duties such as issuing liquor licenses, enforcing pet control measures, even inspecting hen houses and outhouses.

As Western Contra Costa continued to grow, so did the Stege Sanitary District. By 1925, Richmond Annex, Kensington Park, Berkeley Park, Berkeley Highlands Terrace and Arlington Acres had all joined the district. From 1937 through the early 1960s, approximately 20 annexations and assessment

districts were implemented to complete the basic sewer system in use today.

In 1955, Stege constructed one of the Bay Area’s first primary treatment plants at Point Isabel and stopped discharging untreated sewage into the Bay. In 1970, in response to the growing public awareness of the need to protect San Francisco Bay, Stege joined with Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, Piedmont and East Bay MUD in Special District 1 to add secondary treatment of wastewater before discharge into the Bay. These Special District 1 members initiated the East Bay Infiltration/Inflow Survey in 1980 to eliminate wet weather collection system overflows and subsequent untreated discharges into the Bay. The resulting 20-year Sewer Improvement Program was started in 1985. Stege became the leader in carrying out these improvements by completing the first phase of the multi-year program in 1987. Stege subsequently completed its part of this program in 1996 at less than half of the originally estimated cost.

Today, the Stege Sanitary District serves over 40,000 residents and maintains 150 miles of sanitary sewers and two pumping stations. To ensure the district’s ability to continue to provide environmentally effective and efficient service, Stege has embarked on a long-range system rehabilitation program. This program uses a system of video inspection to set the priority for repairs, ensuring that the sewers in the worst condition are repaired first and that no sewer is replaced before it needs to be. The rehabilitation program is financed through the annual user fees collected by the district and low interest State Revolving Fund loans.

As a Special District, Stege is governed by a five person Board of Directors elected by the voters living in the district. District Manager Doug Humphrey provides day-to-day management with a staff of eleven employees.