Clean.
Efficient.
Reliable.

We deliver high-quality water, power, and sewer services in the San Francisco Bay Area.
WATER
Delivering high quality water every day

We serve some of the nation's best tap water to 2.7 million customers in four Bay Area counties. Although the majority of our water comes from snowmelt in the Sierra Nevada, an important part of our water supply comes from rainfall collecting in East Bay and Peninsula reservoirs and a small amount of local groundwater.

- We ensure high quality water by protecting our watershed lands.
- We test our tap water more than 90,000 times each year to be sure our water meets or exceeds all standards.
- We help our customers be more efficient in water usage and look for innovative ways to make the most of our precious water supply, such as recycling and our non-potable program.

POWER
Generating clean energy for a brighter future

The SFPUC provides clean, affordable, and reliable electricity for thousands of San Francisco residents and businesses through Hetch Hetchy Power and CleanPowerSF. Our programs help tackle the climate crisis head on. Instead of relying on fossil fuels, we harness wind, solar, geothermal, and hydro-electric power to serve the electricity needs of our customers.

For more than 100 years, Hetch Hetchy Power has generated greenhouse gas-free hydro-electric power to energize vital municipal services like City Hall, public schools and libraries in addition to affordable and public housing sites and some private and commercial developments. Launched in 2016, CleanPowerSF is San Francisco's community-choice energy program that serves more than 385,000 residents and businesses with affordable, renewable energy.

Together, Hetch Hetchy Power and CleanPowerSF serve more than 70% of the electricity used in San Francisco with clean power. As a local utility with public oversight, we are committed to achieving a clean energy future for San Francisco, today.

SEWER
Protecting public health and the environment

We protect the public and the environment through the operation of the San Francisco Combined Sewer System.

- Nearly 1,900 miles of sewers that collect and convey sanitary and storm flows
- 65 million gallons of sewage treated on dry days
- Up to 500 million gallons of sewage treated on rainy days
- Oceanside Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Southeast Wastewater Treatment Plant
- North Point Wet Weather Facility

We provide innovative programs to manage sewage and stormwater, as well as prevent pollution of the San Francisco Bay and Pacific Ocean.
Protect Your Sewer Pipes

Our priority is to ensure San Francisco’s sewer system is working properly to protect the public health and the environment. We do our part and inspect, clean, repair and replace sewer pipes, drains and everything in between. We need you to partner with us to take care of your property’s sewer system:

As a property owner, the entire sewer lateral is an extension of your property and your responsibility, even if you can’t see it.

Why should you protect your sewer pipes? Poorly kept laterals can result in sewer service interruption, sewer backups inside your property or onto our streets, cause odors, wastewater exposure, and costly unplanned repairs.

Get to know your sewer lateral to prevent sewer/plumbing problems. As the graphic below shows, your lateral is divided into upper and lower portions.

- **Lower Lateral**: Property owners are responsible for clearing and jetting the lower lateral and conduct closed-circuit television inspections to verify defects.
- **Upper Lateral**: Property owners are responsible for clearing, jetting, conducting closed-circuit television inspections to verify defects, and also repairs and replacements.

Your first step: Call a plumber to have your pipes inspected. Learn more at sfpuc.org/SewerLaterals.

Never forget: No trash, grease, or materials other than human waste or toilet paper should go down the toilet, sinks, or bathroom drains. Anything other than human waste or toilet paper will clog and damage pipes.
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**Sewer Vent:** These code required air vents are relief and access points. The vent allows for potential relief of wastewater flow outside of the home if the sewer mains are running full or if there’s a blockage in the lower lateral. The vent is also an access point to clear and inspect the lower lateral.

**Upper Lateral:** The section of the sewer lateral that goes from inside the property to the face of the curb.

**Lower Lateral:** The section of the sewer lateral that goes from the face of the curb to the sewer main.

**Sewer Vent:** These code required air vents are relief and access points. The vent allows for potential relief of wastewater flow outside of the home if the sewer mains are running full or if there’s a blockage in the lower lateral. The vent is also an access point to clear and inspect the lower lateral.

**Backwater Valve:** When properly maintained, these devices help minimize the possibility of wastewater and stormwater from backing into a property.

• **Do you have sewer backups every time it rains?** You may need to install a backwater valve and be eligible for reimbursement through our Floodwater Grant Program: [sfpuc.org/FloodwaterGrant](sfpuc.org/FloodwaterGrant).

**Trap:** Minimizes the possibilities of gases and wastewater from entering the property.
10 WAYS YOU CAN PREVENT WATER POLLUTION

1. Use less-toxic gardening products in your garden.
2. Vacuum and wash pet bedding as a preventative measure before turning to toxic flea and tick pesticides.
3. Bring your car to a professional car washing facility since they capture all of the soapy runoff that may otherwise pollute local waters.
4. Never litter, dispose of trash properly.
5. Dispose of household chemicals at a recycling center or household hazardous waste facility.
6. Pick up, bag and throw away your pet's waste in the trash.
7. Remove some of the concrete in front of your home and plant a tree or make a rain garden.
8. Ride a bike or take public transportation instead of driving alone to reduce the amount of harmful car exhaust pollutants on the street.
9. Take part in a coastal clean-up day.
10. Adopt-a-drain.
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Did you know that San Francisco has two sewer systems? Most of the city has a combined sewer system that collects and treats wastewater and stormwater. But in certain neighborhoods bordering the city, stormwater (runoff from roofs, sidewalks and streets) goes directly into the Bay and ocean through storm drains. This is the city’s municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4). Unnecessary and harmful litter and toxins can build up on the street, enter these storms drains, and pollute the Bay and ocean.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Consider adopting one of the city’s 25,000 storm drains (or catch basins) through the Adopt a Drain program! Keeping storm drains and catch basins free of debris helps to minimize the risk of flooding and keeps trash out of our combined and MS4 systems.
- Sign up to become a Rain Guardian. Rain Guardians keep our city’s Green Infrastructure free of trash so the plants and soil can absorb water and other pollutants. Learn more at rainguardians.org.
- You can report clogged catch basins or street flooding at sf311.org, on the app for Android and iPhone, or by calling 3-1-1.
- Help keep SF Rain Ready! Visit sfpec.org/rain-ready to learn more.
Seaside Buckwheat
Photo by Bobby Vogt
There are many reasons why it’s important to keep rodents out of and away from your home, especially during cold and wet weather when they may want to move indoors. There are things you can do to manage a rodent problem that do not involve using toxic chemicals.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Remove or clean up food that attracted the rodents.
- Keep food (for people and pets) in the refrigerator or in containers with tight-fitting lids. Store items in pest-proof containers. Rats can chew through plastic.
- Remove and clean pet dishes after pets have eaten. Do not leave pet food out overnight, especially outside.
- Empty your garbage often. Outside, keep rodent-proof cans with closed, tight-fitting lids. Line backyard compost bins on all sides with ¼ inch hardware cloth to keep rodents out.
- Seal holes and cracks.
- Don’t give rodents a place to hide by properly disposing of materials used to make nests, like shredded paper. Visit ourwaterourworld.org/rats-and-mice for more information.
Desert Bluebell
Photo by Stanley Ng
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**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Only flush the 3 Ps! Poop, (toilet) paper and pee.
- Be sure you know what goes in the trash, recycling and compost. Learn more at sfrecycles.org.

* Did you know most items are not flushable? Items like “flushable” wipes, prescriptions, menstrual products, diapers and floss belong in an appropriate receptacle, not down a toilet. Flushable wipes are not biodegradable and have to be manually removed from the equipment at wastewater treatment plants and sent to the landfill. Flushed prescription medicines are not fully removed during the wastewater treatment process and can impact aquatic organisms after being discharged into the Bay and ocean. Menstrual products are designed to expand and absorb moisture – they clog sewer pipes and can disrupt the wastewater cleaning process. Floss is not biodegradable and loves to catch itself around anything and everything that might travel down the same path in the sewers.
Western Moss Heather
Photo by Bobby Vogt
Pet waste contains bacteria that are harmful to people and animals. When pet waste isn’t picked up outside, stormwater runoff can wash pet waste down storm drains and into creeks, the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Pick it up! Bring bags with you on walks and make sure to collect all your dog’s poop. Pick up your cat poop outside, too!
- Pet waste isn’t compostable, so put it in the trash bin. Some animal feces can be turned into fertilizer, but the parasites carried in dog and cat feces can cause diseases in humans and should be kept out of the compost.
- Make sure you clean up after all your pets – not just cats and dogs!
With over 450 miles of bike lanes and the most bike shops per square mile in the country, San Francisco is one of the most bike friendly cities in the US. Dioxins are harmful compounds that come from combustion in cars and can cause adverse health effects in both humans and aquatic life. If you’re looking to cut back on your dioxin emissions, consider biking to your destination. Not only are you protecting the surrounding environment, but also getting your exercise in!

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**
- Go to sfmta.com/maps/san-francisco-bike-network-map to see a full map of San Francisco’s bike friendly streets.
- Be sure to wear a helmet!
Sierra Tiger Lily
Photo by Bobby Vogt
Microplastics, pieces of plastic that have broken down to be less than five millimeters long, are harmful for plants, animals and humans. Microplastics have been found in the deepest depths of the sea to the highest mountain tops. Microplastics can shed from clothing (called microfibers), broken down plastic items (like water bottles or utensils) and are even found in some personal care products that get washed down the drain. Once microplastics enter the environment, they are almost impossible to remove, take hundreds of years to break down, and can release toxic chemicals in the environment.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Reduce your use of single-use plastics! Then reuse, and lastly, recycle.
- Read more about work being done in the SF Bay and things you can do to reduce single-use plastic through the San Francisco Estuary Institute: [sfei.org/projects/microplastics](http://sfei.org/projects/microplastics).
- Ask for more local and statewide legislation! Read more about SF's Plastics, Toxics and Litter Reduction Ordinance at [sfenvironment.org/reduceplastic](http://sfenvironment.org/reduceplastic).
Nodding Pincushion
Photo by Rachael Staudt
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Compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), high intensity discharge bulbs (HIDs), fluorescent tubes, and neon signs contain mercury which can have negative effects on human health and the environment. Light emitting diodes (LEDs) do not contain mercury but may have other toxic metals within. Due to the harmful substances in these lightbulbs, they cannot be thrown away into any of the three bins in your home.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**
- You can find a location to drop your mercury containing lightbulbs here: [sfrecycles.org/items](http://sfrecycles.org/items).
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Did you know the SFPUC facilitates classroom presentations on water conservation and pollution prevention with the SF Department of Environment? The classroom presentations can be followed by a field trip at the Garden for the Environment, a teaching garden in the Sunset. For over a decade these partnerships have helped to promote the next generation of California environmental stewards.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Interested in having your child’s school participate? Learn more at: [sfenvironment.org/k-12](http://sfenvironment.org/k-12).
- Visit the Garden for the Environment! To learn more about hours of operation, volunteer opportunities, and more, visit [gardenfortheenvironment.org](http://gardenfortheenvironment.org).
Some of the most common chemical compounds in sunscreen are oxybenzone and octinoxate. These chemical compounds protect skin from UV rays, but also have contributed to the worldwide loss of coral reefs. Similarly, there are water quality concerns with these chemicals and the compounds that they breakdown in to.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Consider physical blockers like hats and clothing with built in SPF protection.
- Visit the Environmental Contaminant Work Group website to find the right sunscreen for you. To learn more, visit ewg.org/sunscreen/report/the-trouble-with-sunscreen-chemicals.
The SFPUC produces about 55,000 tons of biosolids per year. Biosolids are biologically treated wastewater solids that are utilized as soil fertilizer on ranches in Northern California. Biosolids improve soil on these ranches by helping to save water by reducing irrigation needs, improving plant growth, returning valuable nutrients back to the soil, and helping to combat climate change by storing carbon! SFPUC biosolids are 25% carbon and when they are added to soils, much of this carbon gets stored there. More importantly they help plants pull out more CO2 from the atmosphere to be stored in soils.

**HOW DO BIOSOLIDS HELP SOILS STORE CARBON?**

- When plants grow using photosynthesis, they are pulling CO2 out of the atmosphere and turn it into carbon chains. A portion of this carbon ends up stored for the long term in soils when a plant dies or loses leaves and roots.
- Soils and the plants growing on them contain three times as much carbon as the atmosphere. Increasing the amount of carbon soils hold not only makes soils healthier, but also means there is less CO2 in the atmosphere.
- Reducing CO2 in the atmosphere by increasing soil carbon storage is one tool we have in the fight against climate change.
- Research has shown that biosolids help soils store more carbon because biosolids greatly increase plant growth. Increased plant growth means more CO2 is being pulled out of the atmosphere and more carbon is getting stored in soils.
Fiesta Marigold
Photo by Stanley Ng
Fats, oils and grease (FOG) are kitchen essentials that can damage plumbing and our sewer system. Proper disposal of used cooking oil is the best way to protect against plumbing and sewer issues due to FOG. Always remember that used FOG, whether it is bacon grease, frying oil or melted butter, does **NOT** belong down the drain. When FOG goes down the drain it solidifies into thick layers that constrict and clog water flow.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Collect and compost it: For very small amounts of oil, wipe up with a paper towel and throw in the compost bin. For larger amounts, cool it down in your pan, pour it into a compostable container and compost it.
- Collect it and use again: Cool down the used oil in your pan, strain and compost any food scraps, and pour the oil into a clean container to use again.
- If you have a large amount, you may be able to take it to Recology. Call **(415) 330-1400** to find out!

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While the holiday season brings a lot of joy, it also creates a lot of trash. In fact, it’s estimated that trash production in the United States increases by 25% between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day. This trash is coming from wrapping paper, ribbons, packaging, cards, decorations, food wrappers – even Christmas trees. Small adjustments can really help reduce the amount of trash generated during the holidays.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Get a loved one an experience instead of a typical gift. Tickets to a concert, museum or weekend trip are great because they increase the amount of time you spend together while reducing the number of trash-generating purchases.

- Wrap gifts in something sustainable like an old grocery bag, newspaper or repurposed shopping bags. Better yet, go with a reusable holiday-themed box or bag!

- If you celebrate with a Christmas tree, consider buying a living one. SF Environment teams up with Friends of the Urban Forest to bring real trees to your homes, and the streets of San Francisco, each holiday season. You pick up a tree, decorate and nurture it for the holidays, and then return it to be planted in a neighborhood that needs more trees. Find out more at sfenvironment.org/adopt-a-living-tree-for-christmas.
Thanks

We want to thank the following contributors to this calendar. Any mention of individual products, vendors or technologies does not constitute an endorsement by the City and County of San Francisco.

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Publication Notes

The 2023 Calendar is published by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Wastewater Enterprise to educate residents about environmental stewardship and ways they can help prevent pollutants from entering San Francisco's combined sewer system, the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean. For more information on our Water Pollution Prevention Program, visit sfpuc.org/PollutionPrevention.

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