



# Water Works

January 2020



**Looking to future at 2020 Board Retreat**



CFPUA's Deputy Executive Director Frank Styers (second from left) gives a presentation on Sweeney Water Treatment Plant upgrades during the 2020 Board Retreat.

The Cape Fear Public Utility Authority Board tackled topics from cyber security to water conservation at the 2020 Board Retreat.

Held January 22 at the New Hanover County Building Training Room at 320 Chestnut Street, the retreat was an opportunity for board members to discuss key Authority initiatives for the coming year. CFPUA staff gave presentations on a range of topics, including updates on actions to address PFAS in drinking water, customer service software updates, the Authority's drone program, and sustainability efforts across CFPUA.

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**FIND OUT ABOUT:**

[Preventing Sewer Backups](#)

[Emerging Contaminants](#)

[History of Sweeney Water Treatment Plant](#)

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Several presentations focused of meeting the region's long-term water needs. Board members heard staff recommendations on conserving water through potential irrigation restrictions and an update on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' proposal to transfer ownership of Lock and Dam Number 1 in the Cape Fear River, a critical piece of CFPUA's raw water infrastructure.

## CONTACT US

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To view the full board retreat materials, [click here](#).

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## CFPUA's progress on addressing PFAS

You may have seen recent news media reports about an environmental nonprofit group releasing results of PFAS testing of drinking water in select communities across the country, including ours.

The report by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) stated a sample collected June 27, 2019, “within the likely service area of the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority” had a total concentration of 50.5 parts per trillion for all PFAS analyzed. CFPUA has and continues to publish detailed results of our regular sampling for PFAS on our website. You can find the latest information [here](#).

While the EWG results appear to be consistent with CFPUA's for that time period, a few considerations are important to keep in mind. First, EWG tested for the presence of 30 PFAS compounds, while CFPUA currently tests for more than 40. In addition, levels of PFAS detected in our drinking water are largely dependent on levels in the Cape Fear River, the source of 80 percent of the drinking water CFPUA distributes. Those levels can see significant fluctuations over time.

Finally, it is unclear whether EWG's data lends itself to comparisons that rank results for different communities. This by no means questions the validity of EWG's data for individual results, and this is important information that should be available to these communities. But EWG's results reflect single-point-in-time samples taken at different dates (from June to December 2019) in different

water systems by different people.

CFPUA already is taking steps to reduce PFAS in the drinking water we treat at Sweeney Water Treatment Plant. These include interim measures begun in fall 2018 to make adjustments in existing filters at Sweeney that have reduced PFAS by about 40 percent on average. A long-term solution began in November with initial construction work on a \$43 million project to build eight new deep-bed granular activated carbon filters at Sweeney. Once those come online in 2022, we expect to see PFAS reduced by about 90 percent on average.

CFPUA already has paid millions of dollars in PFAS-related costs since 2017, even before we build the new filters at Sweeney. Once the new filters come online, annual operating costs are expected to be about \$2.9 million.

We're taking these steps to address a problem caused by Chemours and DuPont during their years of profitable operation upriver from us. We believe Chemours and DuPont should be paying for the costs to address the problems they caused. So far, neither company has contributed anything to CFPUA's costs. This is why we have filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking to force the companies to pay.

More information about what CFPUA is doing to address PFAS, including the latest on legal action, may be found [here](#).

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## **Loughlin Plant welcomes Wilmington leaders**



Members of the Leadership Wilmington Class of 2020 toured CFPUA's James A. Loughlin Wastewater Treatment Plant on January 14. The Loughlin Plant, also known as Northside, is one of two wastewater treatment plants operated by the Authority and has a capacity to treat up to 16 million gallons per day (MGD).

Offered by the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Wilmington is a 10-month program for Wilmington's leaders and future leaders to utilize their skills to work for the betterment of our community. [Click here for more information on the program.](#)

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## Employee Spotlight

*Each month we introduce you to one of the more than 300 employees at CFPUA who work to provide you with the best water and wastewater services.*





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## **Stephanie Coffel** **Microbiology Lab Technician**

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**Name:** *Stephanie Coffel*

**Birthplace:** *Ablemarle, NC*

**Department/Division:** *Environmental Services*

**Position:** *Microbiology Lab Technician*

**Length of Employment:** *6 years*

**Briefly describe your typical day at work:** *CFPUA's lab staff collect and test over 200 water and wastewater samples each month. Water samples are collected every day from customer's homes, businesses, sampling stations, CFPUA's water and wastewater plants and the distribution system. All samples are tested to make sure no bacteria such as total coliform or E. coli is present. Multiple tests are performed to also check for things like fluoride and chlorine levels, conductivity, alkalinity, pH, turbidity, iron, manganese, phosphorus, hardness, ortho-phosphorus, aluminum and more.*

**What do you enjoy most about your job?** *I really enjoy the structured environment, and*

*knowing what I will be working on at the end of each day.*

**Tell us about one of your biggest accomplishments or challenges while working at**

**CFPUA:** *In December 2017, I was promoted from lab technician to my current microbiology position.*

**What advice would you give to recent new hires?** *Get to work on time -- it's important for a team environment. Do your best when you're here. You have to pull your weight and be part of the team.*

**What's one thing you'd want customers to know about your department, position, or CFPUA in general?** *I think customers may not understand the amount of testing and work involved to make sure drinking water and wastewater are treated property. We take pride in our work.*

**What do you like to do when you're not at work?** *I love going to the beach to collect shells or play frisbee-golf with my husband. We've known each other since the sixth grade. I also play with my bunny, Ghost.*

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