

# TIPS FOR A GREENER LIFESTYLE!

## *How can we live sustainably?*

IN THIS SERIES WE EXPLORE HOW WE CAN BE SUSTAINABLE TOGETHER, RIGHT HERE IN ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY!



THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:



## SUSTAINABLE FLUSHING WITH THE WATER CONSERVATION OFFICE

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When it comes to sustainable water use at home, people of all ages can share ways to use water wisely, such as not running the water while brushing their teeth and taking shorter showers. However, we would like to offer some tips to help sustain our infrastructure, specifically regarding sewers, and reduce waste.

Taking a tour of one of our three water reclamation facilities offers an excellent opportunity to learn about and observe behaviors that can be improved when caring for our sewer system. If you take a look inside headworks, where solids (mostly trash) are removed from the wastewater, you are sure to see certain types of trash. Let me enlighten you about the items we see most frequently and the industry names for some of these unique treasures. You will always encounter condoms (Oconee River Whitefish), tampon applicators (beach whistles), and wipes tangled up (mopheads), along with many other items that do not belong in the sewer. All the trash we screen out of the wastewater will be taken to the landfill, and there is a cost for each load we deliver. Not only can trash damage the machinery we use to clean the wastewater and cause clogs, but as the pounds of trash we send to the landfill increase, so does the cost of our operations.

So, what are some solutions to this trashiness? Of course, we promote the 4 Ps of Flushing so that instead of listing everything that shouldn't be flushed, we can state the only things that should be flushed: Pee, Poo, Paper, and Puke. However, that doesn't eliminate this trash from existing. Here are some sustainable solutions for our main offenders:



PHOTO CREDIT: AUDREY HUGHES  
HEADWORKS SMELLS AT THE  
CEDAR CREEK WATER  
RECLAMATION FACILITY

# COMMON CULPRITS:



## PERIOD PRODUCTS

There are several options for a zero-waste period that eliminate the possibility of flushing period products down the toilet. Reusable menstrual discs or cups are excellent choices for insertable items. Reusable pads and period underwear are great options for external protection. If these options are not your cup of tea, simply ensure that period products do not enter the sewers by always disposing of them in the trash.

900 LB MOPHEAD  
PHOTO CREDIT:  
ACCGOV PUD

### The Monster of all "Mopheads"



get a little closer...



Did your  
child lose a  
toothbrush?  
We found it.



Need a face  
mask? This  
protects  
no one.



You can  
probably  
reuse this  
flosser.



"Flushable"  
wipes clog  
pipes. Never  
flush.

## "FLUSHABLE" WIPES

"Flushable" wipes are more durable and can leave a cleaner feeling than toilet paper alone. Consider installing a bidet if it is the clean feeling you are chasing. Several easy-to-install bidet options would cost less than a year's supply of wipes. If the durability of a wipe is what keeps them in your bathroom, consider experimenting with different septic-safe toilet paper brands. If you don't want to change the habit of using wipes, change the habit of flushing them. Wipes are detrimental to sewer and septic systems. A dedicated trash can with a lid can provide a more discreet and less fragrant disposal option.



## CONDOMS

Please do not stop using these. I've got nothing for you to replace this with. All we ask is that you do not flush them. As stated above, having a trash can with a lid can be an option for more discreet and less fragrant disposal.

Thank you for doing your part to keep our sewers happy! If you already follow our 4 Ps of flushing, the best thing you can do is spread the word to others to help us keep our machinery in tiptop shape and lower the costs of visits to the landfill. If you are interested in seeing the wastewater facility for yourself, look out for our quarterly public tours of water facilities or contact me at [katie.kirkland@acccgov.com](mailto:katie.kirkland@acccgov.com).

And please stop flushing condoms, I can't keep telling our Water Reclamation Facility field trips of 3rd graders that they are balloons, they are starting to not believe me!