



PO Box 640323, Pike Road, AL 36064

## **Annual Newsletter and Update on Wastewater System Maintenance Agreements for 2022**

We hope you all are having a happy and healthy new year! We thank you for your business in years past, and we look forward to continuing to work with you in 2022 and years to come.

As everyone knows, the cost of everything is increasing rapidly, and our industry is not immune to the rampant inflation. Along with rapid price increases, businesses are also facing extremely difficult labor market conditions. In our particular industry, there is essentially no one at all in the labor pool with the skills and knowledge required to do what we do at the level of quality I demand, so our only option is to train staff members from the ground up. Because what we do requires so many different types of hands-on and critical thinking skills that are no longer taught in schools, and because very few kids have any exposure to skilled trade type work, the learning curve is very steep and long in our business. Additionally, due to changes in our culture, many young people do not even consider careers in the trades, and often believe that the work is beneath them. As a result, it is difficult to find people who are intelligent enough to learn our business, because they first have to be willing to subject themselves to a work environment that includes long hours, physical and mental strain, sometimes very unpleasant weather, and a myriad of other challenges like equipment breakdowns, long drives, stressful emergency situations, and many other factors requiring toughness and tenacity. While our work is far from easy, it is rewarding in many ways, and we encourage anyone who has the opportunity to influence young people to urge them to at least consider skilled trades as a good career option. As an insider, I see a future where skilled trades workers will make very respectable wages and salaries. Because of my personal background, I would highly encourage young people to gain both academic education in technical fields AND hands-on skills!

Considering the above, it is imperative for us to minimize employee turnover so that we can maintain our base of experience. While we sometimes fall short, we try very hard to hire only people that are personable and show "soft skills" that lead to good customer experiences. Because of the long-term detrimental effects on our country, we will not participate in the illegal labor market (in any manner, be it based on worker legal status, or illegal/unethical practices such as paying employees as 1099 subcontractors). In order to maintain and constantly improve our staff when there is turnover or growth, we must compensate our employees better and better as time goes on.

Pricing is something I take very seriously, and unfortunately, this year, we will need to increase prices. Like everyone, we want to be reasonably compensated for what we do, and there is nothing easy about our business. Many of you know that we have not built our business by being “the cheap guys”. With good compensation though, it’s only fair that we hold ourselves to a high standard of performance. While our services are usually not the cheapest, one of the things I stress to the staff is that it is incumbent upon us to strive to be the best. Occasionally we fall short, but we do strive for a very high level of professionalism and competence in comparison to others in the industry.

## **Update on Services Offered**

As you all know, we are in the business of installing and maintaining onsite wastewater systems, which are typically known as septic systems, but the term onsite wastewater system refers to a much broader array of technologies for treating and disposing of wastewater where traditional sewer is not available.

In addition to single home onsite wastewater systems, we also offer the following:

- Consulting & design/build services, in conjunction with trusted engineers
- Evaluation of existing systems for real estate transfers
- Community wastewater systems, which make high-density development possible on property that is outside the reach of city sewer
- Water, sewer (traditional municipal sewer), and fire line installation, from a single new water or sewer tap, to installation of mains and services for entire developments
- Driveways/rural access roads
- Miscellaneous grading and excavation
- Vegetation management/mulching
- Land clearing

Because we hold ourselves to a high standard of quality, and our quality is sometimes limited by the quality of the materials available for our industry, we are considering expanding and diversifying in ways that will allow us to begin to solve the problem of the unavailability of fully satisfactory products.

## **Staffing Update**

Bailey Ward has been promoted to Service Manager, and oversees preventive maintenance repairs. Over approximately four years, Bailey has proven to be an able problem solver and shown commitment to both our company and our customers. He is also our go-to guy for many special skills like pressure testing of utility lines and other special projects. While I

always want to provide a personal touch as much as possible, due to growth of the company, it has become increasingly necessary for me to delegate responsibility. As such, when you have maintenance or repair concerns, please contact Bailey directly, at 334-312-8351. Bailey is primarily assisted by Dave Colburn.

Holly Wright, who also helps to manage her family's plumbing business, Coston Plumbing, now assists me with administrative tasks. She can be reached at 334-657-0978. Holly will be helping me to improve the administration of our maintenance program.

## **Overview of Maintenance Agreements**

- Standard maintenance agreements include two preventive maintenance visits per year; the maintenance plan year runs Feb. 1 through Jan 31.
- Special maintenance agreements include more or fewer visits than standard, based on very heavy usage, very light usage, or other special situations or system types.
- Visits are often unannounced based on frequent rapid changes in our schedule, though the crew often contacts the customer before arrival, and has been instructed to knock on the door upon arrival.
- We ask that you please provide us with updated current information when you remit payment.
- We developed the maintenance agreement program because, in our experience, customers who allow us to proactively maintain their systems tend to avoid and/or have minimized problems much more so than customers who simply wait for problems to occur. When systems are not proactively maintained, the problems that occur tend to snowball rapidly, and become very expensive.
- Due to the nature of mechanical and electrical devices, all modern engineered wastewater systems will require repair and replacement of components from time to time. A quality installation followed by an ongoing preventive maintenance program yields the best long-term results in terms of system performance, longevity, and minimized life cycle expense and inconvenience.
- The nature of the sewer business is that there are sometimes very inconvenient emergencies. While we always try to take care of emergencies as quickly as possible for every customer, we try to give extra consideration to those customers who are proactive about maintaining their systems and have purchased maintenance agreements. We generally make every effort to address your emergencies either the same day you call, or as early as possible the next day.
- Because problem situation almost always get worse with time, we ask that you notify us as soon as possible when you've been alerted to a problem with your system.
- One of the things that our maintenance agreements help with is our ability to stock components and parts that our maintenance customers need on a regular basis. Over the course of 2021, stocking material became more important than it has ever been in the past, as many of the pumps and other materials have become difficult to get. Bailey Ward has done a great job of keeping on top of our inventory and reordering items as needed.

**We appreciate your business and look forward to continuing to serve you.**

If you ever have a problem, concern, or referral that needs my personal attention, please give me a call.

Thanks!

Marty Clarke  
President

If any of your contact information has changed, please update it here and return it to us with your payment:

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Other\_\_\_\_\_