

Water Utility Assistance Program: Lessons in Grassroots Activism and Innovation

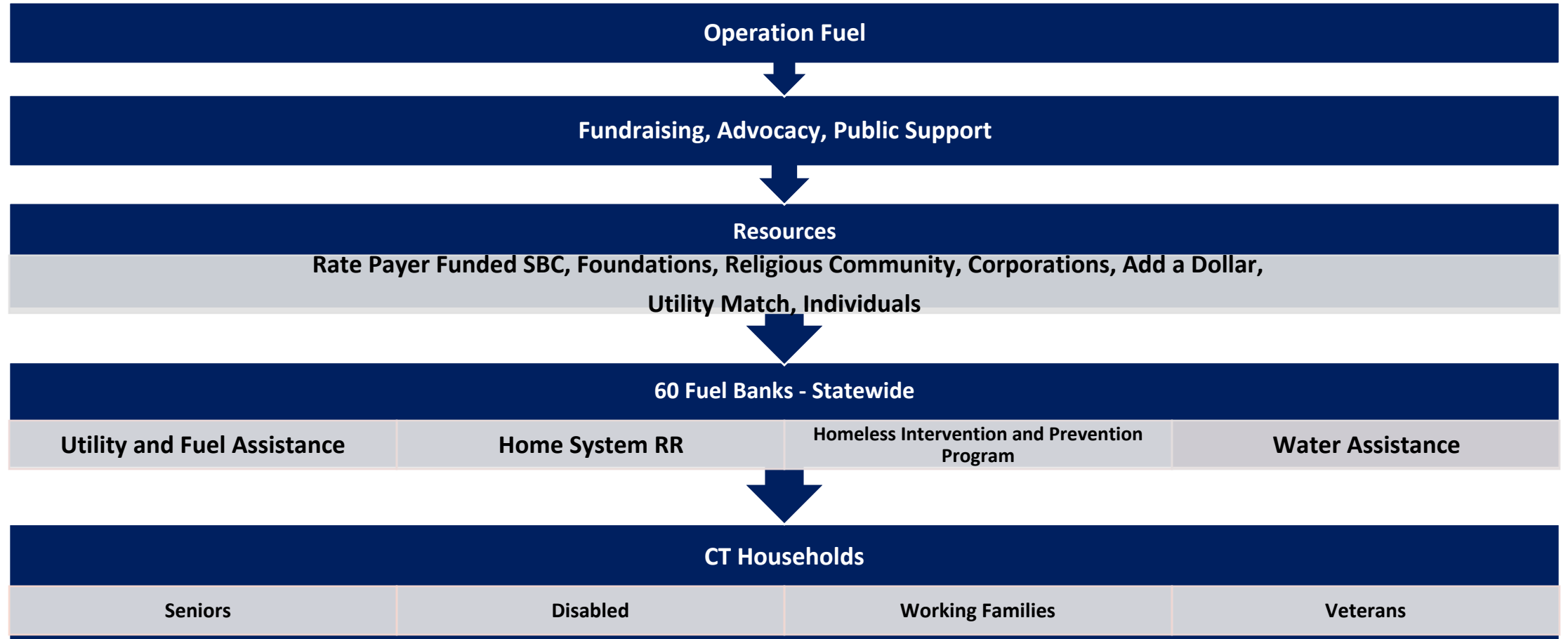
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www.OperationFuel.org



About Operation Fuel



Water Utility Structure in Connecticut

- 10 Investor Owned WU and several small municipal WU
 - Investor Owned are Regulated by the PURA, which addresses complex regulatory issues
 - Municipal WU's vary from town to town
 - Managed by a local Water Control Commission or Water Division
- Water Planning Council
 - Established in 2001, to address water resources and water polices
 - Water Planning Advisory Committee
 - State Water Plan
- American Water Works Association, CT Section



The Struggle is Real

- Be prepared to face resistance as some WU will:
 - Be defensive and believe what they have in place has worked well
 - Believe they know their customers
 - Fuel Funds are not Utilities and Utilities are not Fuel Funds but some Utilities have not made that connection yet!
 - Elected officials, local and state lack awareness
- Competition and Fear of Mission Drift
 - Non-profits with similar missions
 - This is good for customers in need
 - Board of Directors may not be on board with new initiative



Getting to Yes

- Defining the Affordability Problem and its impacts
 - Health and safety
 - One's ability to pay for water & sewer bills, basic needs (housing, home energy, food, etc)
 - Ability to pay is not the same as willingness to pay
 - Decision makers
 - Legislative
 - Water / Environmental Advocates
 - Water related associations
- Implementation
 - Develop program guidelines
 - Train partner fuel banks
 - Build Awareness



Where we are today

- Fee for service contracts with three of the largest Water Utilities in State
 - WU's support programs w/own funds
 - Total fee for service contracts, \$72,000
 - Foundation grants for water utility, \$20,000 annually (29 towns only)
 - Invited to join American Water Works Association, CT Section
 - Seat on Water Planning Commission – Advisory Group
 - Invited to attend DC Fly-In with WU Exec's in May (cancelled due to COVID)
 - Planning Clean Water and Health Impacts Symposium with Elected Officials



Thank you!

Brenda Watson Brenda@operationfuel.org



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Overview

NEUAC
Water Utility Assistance
United We Stand

dc
water is life®



Times are challenging.
We are sure you have some questions.



NEUAC – Water Utility Assistance
United We Stand



ARMON CURD – EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

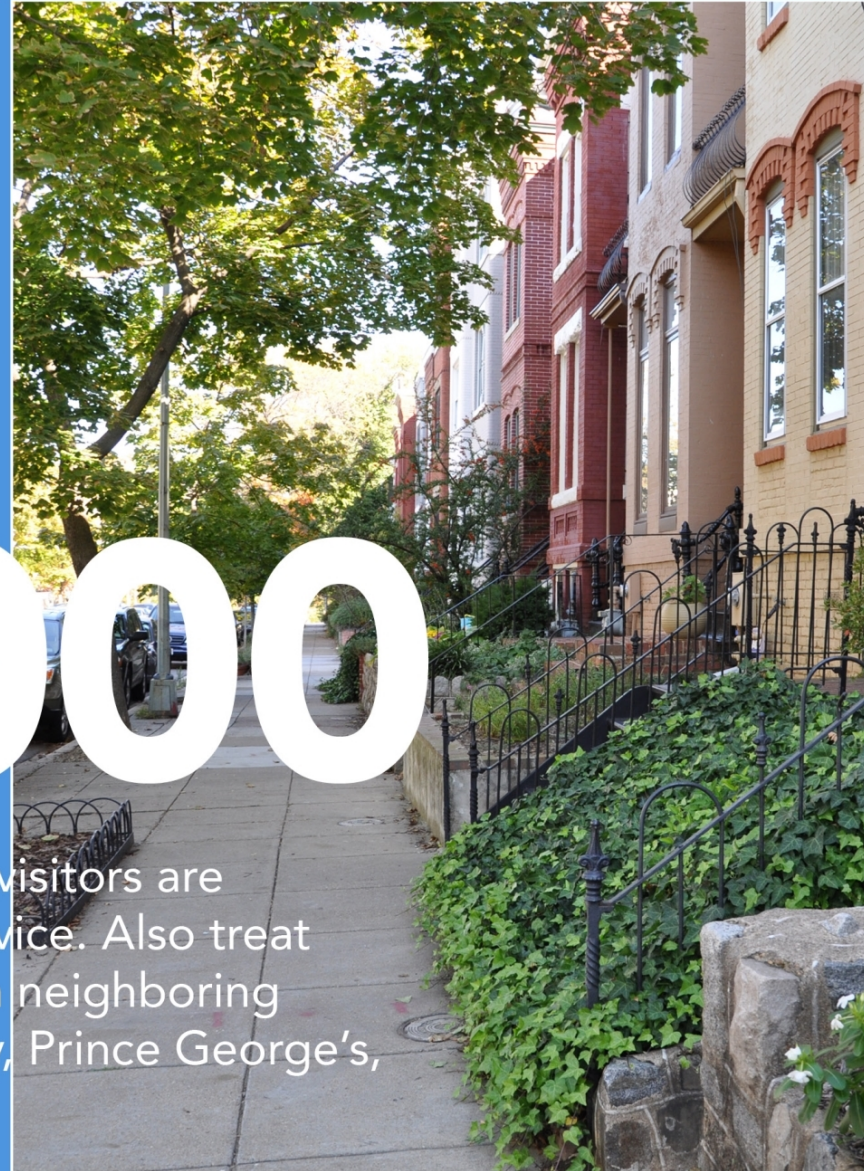
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Service Area

700,000

DC residents and 21 million annual visitors are provided water and wastewater service. Also treat wastewater for 1.6 million people in neighboring jurisdictions, including Montgomery, Prince George's, Fairfax and Loudoun Counties.



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Water Infrastructure

Half installed before 1940
Median age is 80 years old



Expected service life is 100-120 years

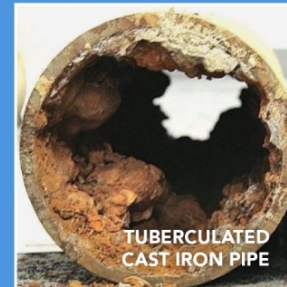


1,300

miles of interconnected pipes



CAST IRON WATER MAIN



TUBERCULATED CAST IRON PIPE



WATER MAIN COLLAPSE

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Sewer Infrastructure

Median age is 90 years old

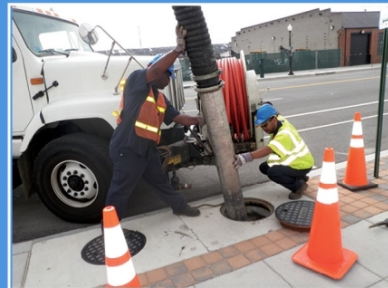


Expected service life is 110-120 years



2,000

miles of sewers



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Highlights

3,599

customers were provided with financial assistance



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COVID-19

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COVID-19



1. Water Plays a Critical Role in Protecting Public Health

2. Wanted to Ensure Everyone had Access to Clean Water

- First local utility to suspend disconnections for non-payment.
- Also suspended late payments.
- Restored service for customers previously disconnected.

3. Partnered with the District to Offer More Financial Relief to Customers

4. Essential Service – Continue to Serve Our Customers

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COVID-19



5. Concern for the Safety of Our Staff

- Expanded telework for everyone who could work from home.
- Switched to rotating shifts for work crews.
- Suspended non-emergency in-home visits.

6. Significant Financial Impact

- Water consumption is down 9% overall.
- Decrease in customer payments.
- Impact estimated at 5% of FY2020 revenues.
- Continue to assess impact on future revenues.

7. Belt Tightening – Immediate Steps to Curtail Spending

- Restricted hiring except for critical vacancies.
- Worked with departments to prioritize expenditures where possible.
- Prioritizing capital program to pause projects if necessary to align with revenue.

Customer Assistance Programs (CAP)

CAP

Provides a discount on the first 400 cubic feet (3,000 gallons) of water, sewer, PILOT and ROW services used each month. Eligible households will receive a 75 percent reduction in the monthly CRIAC fee and a Water Service Replacement Fee waiver. The monthly discount is approximately \$77 a month.

CAP 2

Provides a discount on the first 300 cubic feet (2,250 gallons) of water and sewer services used each month (with the exception of PILOT and ROW fees) and a 50 percent reduction in the monthly CRIAC fee. The monthly discount is approximately \$50 a month.

CAP 3

Provides a discount of 75 percent off of the monthly CRIAC. The monthly discount is approximately \$15 a month.

Customer Assistance Programs (CAP)

Emergency Residential Relief Program

Eligible households may receive bill assistance up to \$2,000 as a one-time emergency benefit.

S.P.L.A.S.H. (Serving People By Lending A Supporting Hand)

Provides one-time assistance. Administered by Greater Washington Urban League. Funded by donations from customers, community and DC Water employees.

Nonprofit Relief Program

Assists eligible organizations with Clean Rivers Impervious Area Charge (CRIAC). Participants can receive credits of up to 90 percent of the CRIAC portion of their water bill.

For more information and to apply, visit [**dcwater.com/CAP**](https://dcwater.com/CAP)

Live Q&A

Submit a question to be answered by our speakers **LIVE!** Questions will be read aloud by the moderator. We will attempt to answer as many questions as possible.

