



2020 Annual Report

A Year of Challenges. A Year of Progress.





2021

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Clarence Roberts
Chair, Board of Directors

2020 was a year that none of us anticipated. The COVID-19 pandemic affected almost every aspect of our lives: where we worked, played, worshipped, and traveled. We weren't able to dine in our favorite restaurants and our children weren't able to go to school.

What COVID did not affect was the ACSA's delivery of safe, reliable water and wastewater services. Your water was always clean of COVID. I am proud of the ACSA's work detailed in this report. It shows you how the dedicated men and women of the utility came through for you, our valued customer.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Gary O'Connell
Executive Director

In our 2020-2022 Strategic Plan, I wrote about how the ACSA was entering into a period that offers vast opportunities and enormous challenges.

Little did I - or any of us - know at the time that a new threat would emerge that not only changed the way we worked but how we lived.

2020 was a year we had to learn, unlearn, and relearn everything. I want to thank our staff for the work you see in this report and our customers for their patience and understanding throughout this trying time.



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2020



The ACSA serves more than 78,000 drinking water customers.

The Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) is committed to providing the highest quality customer service that:

A

ALIGNS to our values of honesty, trust, integrity, mutual respect, open communication, and employee empowerment.

C

COMMITTS to our community through responsiveness and collaboration. We actively promote conservation and environmental stewardship.

S

STRIVES for professional excellence by maintaining consistent and fair policies across the organization, and encouraging pride and dedication to ensure a healthy working environment.

A

ASPIRES to practice strategic foresight and fiscal responsibility while embracing innovation.

VISION

Serve & conserve today, sustain for tomorrow, & protect our resources forever.

MISSION

With pride and dedication, we serve our customers by providing clean safe water, exemplary wastewater services, and fire protection infrastructure. Together with our community partners, we maintain and improve our utility system in a timely, cooperative, and financially responsible manner.

Every day, the ACSA sells more than 4,700,000 gallons of clean drinking water.

THE ACSA'S BOARD & MANAGEMENT TEAM



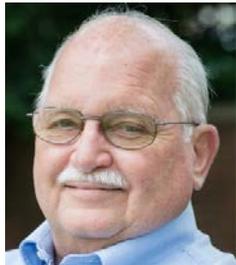
Rivanna District:
Clarence Roberts
Chair



White Hall District:
John Parcels



Scottsville District:
Richard Armstrong



Jack Jouett District:
Charles Tolbert



Samuel Miller District:
Jennifer Sulzberger



Rio District:
Nathan Moore



Gary O'Connell
Executive Director



Pete Gorham, P.E.
Director of Engineering



Quin Lunsford
Director of Finance



Mike Lynn
Operations Manager



Travis Marrs
Manager of
Information Technology



Emily Niziolek
HR & Administration
Manager

2020

The ACSA delivers your drinking water through more than 350 miles of mains.

WHO WE SERVE

The Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) distributes treated water and collects sewage for treatment, while maintaining, expanding, and replacing the infrastructure within the service area. We were created by the County Board of Supervisors in 1964 with the Crozet community as its sole customer.

In the 1960s, the South Rivanna Dam was constructed and several subdivisions were developed throughout Albemarle County, such as Carrsbrook, Woodbrook, Westmoreland, Northfields, Berkeley, Hessian Hills, Montvue, Colthurst, Flordon, and West Leigh.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, these systems were acquired by the County for the ACSA, and the County purchased water from the City of Charlottesville supply to provide all these areas with public water and eliminate their well systems.

In 1973, the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority was formed and became the wholesale provider of water and wastewater treatment for the City and ACSA.

More than 50 years later, the ACSA provides water distribution and wastewater collection services to more than 20,000 customer accounts. The community enjoys water drawn from a protected watershed contained almost entirely within the County's borders.

We maintain close to 350 miles of water lines and nearly 300 miles of sewer mains, including those serving the urban areas of Albemarle County, and nearby communities of Scottsville and Crozet.

To protect the public, the ACSA maintains more than 2,800 fire hydrants.

MEETING COVID'S CHALLENGES

When 2020 began, none of us could imagine where the new year would lead all of us. The ASCA was focused on implementing our strategic plan and the several key components that will improve our services and operations for years to come. Then came March and a pandemic whose impacts no one could've fully planned for.

The ASCA immediately set into motion our emergency plans so we could make sure our core duties were never placed in jeopardy as we were ever mindful of the health and safety of our customers and our employees. We adjusted our staffing and operations, both inside and outside of the ASCA, to make sure your services stayed clean, plentiful, and reliable.

One thing always held true throughout the pandemic and that was the fact that our drinking water was not at risk for contamination, not for one moment. Multi-barrier treatment and disinfection processes like the ones used to produce your water remove or inactivate viruses like the coronavirus.

Since the pandemic hit our community, the ASCA has tried to act thoughtfully, with flexibility and responsibility. We've done our best to learn and adapt, and you have provided us valuable input through our customer service survey.

While our work throughout the pandemic was, at times, difficult, it did not knock the ASCA far off our stride when it came to our strategic plan. As you will read throughout the rest of this report, we were able to continue making significant progress on key projects.

As this report is written, COVID vaccines are entering the public domain. We hope that our report in 2021 will be able to mention the ending of this crisis.

The ASCA operates nine water pump stations and eight water storage tanks.

FULFILLING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2019, the ACSA's Board of Directors joined with our staff to examine our goals and set a strategic direction that will ensure we remain accountable to our customers and meet the challenges we know are lying ahead. They ranged from meeting federal mandates to repairing our aging infrastructure and replacing a maturing, knowledgeable workforce.

This 2020-2022 Strategic Plan serves as a blueprint for excellence in customer service, technology, and environmental sustainability. The services we provide are vital to every person, business, and community in Albemarle County. We are using this plan as a clear roadmap for efficient and effective performance; financial responsibility; outreach and leadership; and the continued delivery of high-quality water.

While the coronavirus pandemic created several hurdles for our work at the ACSA, our staff was able to continue making significant progress on the key initiatives.



During the summer of 2020, we announced the launch of MyWater, an innovation program to enhance the high-quality services we currently provide through a series of customer service and infrastructure-related improvements.

Two of our goals with MyWater are to make your lives easier while making our water system more resilient and efficient. The first MyWater innovation that will benefit both you and the ACSA is the start of our Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project.

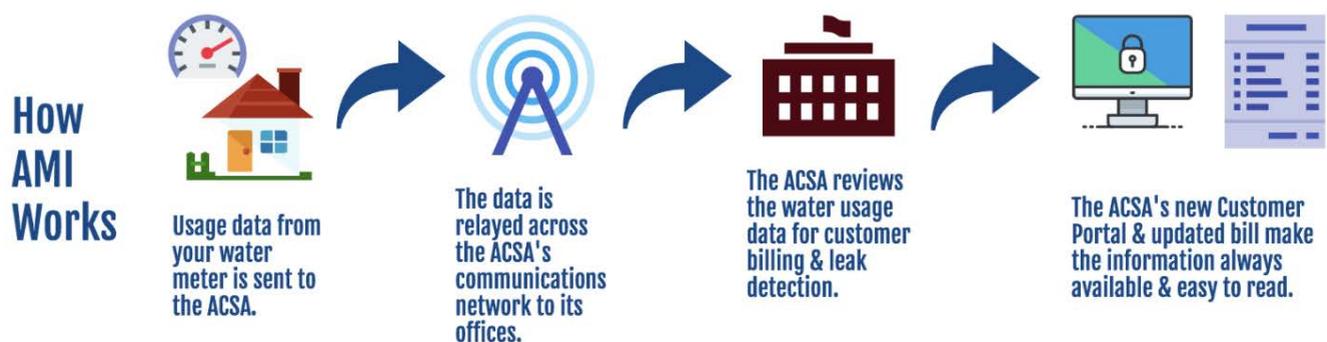
In the last twelve months, the ACSA completed more than 11,000 work orders.

ADVANCED METERING INFRASTRUCTURE

Advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) is an integrated system of technologically advanced water meters, communications networks, and data management systems that enables enhanced two-way communication between utilities and their customers.

The ACSA's AMI project will improve the customer experience, support green initiatives, and provide the ACSA strategic information for utility decision-making. The upgraded meters will eventually give customers 24/7 access to their water usage through a conveniently accessible web portal. And they will be able to choose to receive text or email alerts about leaks or unusual usage, saving them money and the ACSA water.

AMI also improves customer service by enabling both the customer and ACSA staff to look at the same real-time data while discussing their accounts. Here's how it works:



In 2020, the ACSA's AMI team, which includes staff across several departments as well as outside contractors, achieved several significant milestones that will enable the project to fully launch in earnest, starting in the spring of 2021. At first, a pilot program will test the system before it is implemented across our entire service area over the next two years.

The ACSA's service area covers more than 50 square miles.

ENHANCING CUSTOMER SERVICE

Under MyWater, the ACSA also moved forward with projects designed to provide continual improvement with our customer service, as well as with our operations.

In 2020, we moved toward upgrading our bill payment systems to give our customers an enhanced ability to manage their accounts. The Paymentus system will provide an improved payment page on our website, enable mobile payments on any device, and supply options to set up recurring payments. The launch will take place during the first half of 2021.

In addition to improving our service in ways clearly noticeable to our customers, the ACSA made major progress with an upgrade to our Computerized Maintenance Management System, or CMMS.

A CMMS enables a utility to schedule, track, and monitor maintenance activities to provide cost, inventory, personnel, and reporting history. A well-operating system boosts the overall efficiency of utility operations and applies the latest technologies toward streamlining processes.

In 2020, Cityworks was selected to establish a centralized database with direct integration with the ACSA's GIS system. The new system will offer a customer web portal for the 24/7 creation of customer service requests; improved inventory and asset management; and enhanced tracking of work orders and asset inspections.

The end result of this effort? Continual improvement of our customer service, our management of our water and wastewater infrastructure, and our efficiency in performing our duties.

The ACSA serves more than 70,000 wastewater customers.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to our Advanced Metering Infrastructure project under MyWater, the ACSA focused on several additional improvements to our water and wastewater systems.

We completed a vulnerability assessment where all our critical assets were analyzed for risks caused by both natural and human-made hazards, using American Water Works Association standards for risk and resilience management of water and wastewater systems.

The end report establishes mitigation measures to lower risks and increase resiliency. Mitigation measures such as industrial-strength locks, perimeter security lighting, and access control signage have been completed.

ACSA also conducted a comprehensive energy audit of the Operations Center and all pump stations. We evaluated current energy consumption and the factors that drive it, as well as an analysis of utility rate structures to identify potential cost savings.

Surveys were conducted on all systems, including operation and maintenance procedures to determine where energy conservation can be increased. We are analyzing our energy footprint and considering improvements.

Our “find and fix” program of sanitary sewer rehabilitation reduces infiltration and inflow (I&I) into our wastewater system. This work utilized two publicly-bid miscellaneous sewer rehabilitation contracts to make repairs and rehabilitate problems found during systematic CCTV inspection by ACSA crews and our subcontractor.

Last fiscal year, the ACSA collected more than 1.4 BILLION gallons of wastewater.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

One of our Strategic Plan goals is to replace all asbestos-cement and galvanized steel water mains in our system, so the ACSA completed several projects to address these aging mains.

In the Meriwether Hill area, crews replaced nearly 14,000 feet of existing, undersized water mains which had been in service for more than 50 years.

In Scottsville, the ACSA replaced 2,400 feet of water mains that were undersized and found to be in poor condition. The upgrade also increased fire protection in the area.

In the Ashcroft community, we upgraded two pump stations to increase capacity and reduce the amount of time it takes for them to replenish the water storage tank, allowing for more frequent cycling of the tank's supply. At the same time, the ACSA improved the resiliency of the stations by installing emergency generators.

Three of the ACSA's sewer pump stations - Glenmore, Georgetown Green, and Crozet - were experiencing higher than normal amounts of solid debris that caused undue wear and tear on them, reducing their effective life.

They have also been subjected to clogging from the fibrous cloth wipes that are marketed as "flushable" but do not break down in the sanitary sewer collection system.

Maintenance identified the need to install comminutors (also known as grinders) in the wet wells or just upstream of them, to eliminate these solids that are adversely impacting our pumps.

The ACSA operates and maintains more than 300 miles of wastewater mains.

COVID CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY

In 2019, the ACSA conducted a customer survey to gain important feedback about our services. We received nearly 1,200 responses reflecting high levels of satisfaction with the ACSA, with well more than 90% of the respondents stating they were satisfied with our services. We were also able to gain helpful insights into where we could continue to improve.

Given the value of the 2019 survey, the ACSA decided to field an additional one to gain important information about our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Just like everyone else, the ACSA made a series of unanticipated decisions at the start of the crisis to make sure we reliably delivered our water and wastewater services while keeping our staff safe and our customers' accounts protected.

As it became apparent the pandemic would continue into 2021, the ACSA crafted the survey so it would enable us to gather information about where we were being successful with our decisions and where adjustments to our initial choices could be made to benefit our ratepayers and our employees.

The survey – delivered through ACSA customer bills and our website – used eight short, but specifically designed, questions to take in a respondent's thoughts about key customer interactions with the ACSA; their customer satisfaction level; the information provided by the ACSA; and their access to the ACSA during the pandemic.

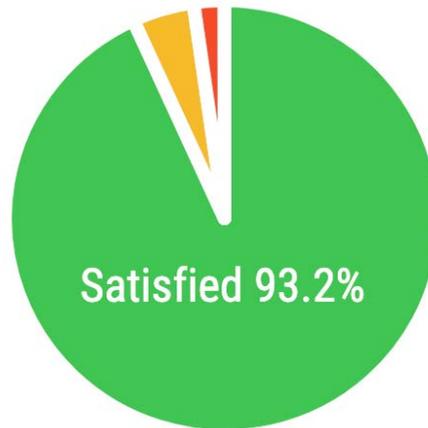
Customers were also provided with the ability to submit written answers so they could give as much detail beyond the questions' multiple choices as they wanted to provide.

The ACSA's largest customers use more than 22 million gallons of water a year.

COVID CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY

2020

After contacting the ACSA during the pandemic, how satisfied were you with the service you received?



How satisfied are you with the information provided with the ACSA about your water?



Has the closing of the ACSA office to the public had an impact on your water or sewer service?



During May of 2020, there was a COVID-related 5.4% drop in water consumption.

THE ACSA IN THE COMMUNITY

In keeping with our Values, the ACSA takes part year-round in several events and educational opportunities held throughout our service area. Whether it's an Earth Day festival, a local 5K, or collecting Toys for Tots, our employees enjoy helping the communities we serve. *(Pictures are from pre-Covid events.)*



The ACSA serves six distinct water districts, each represented by a board member.

THE ACSA IN THE COMMUNITY

As part of the national "Imagine a Day Without Water" event that highlights how essential safe and reliable drinking water is to our daily lives, the ACSA asks local students to take part in an art contest where they imagined a day without water.

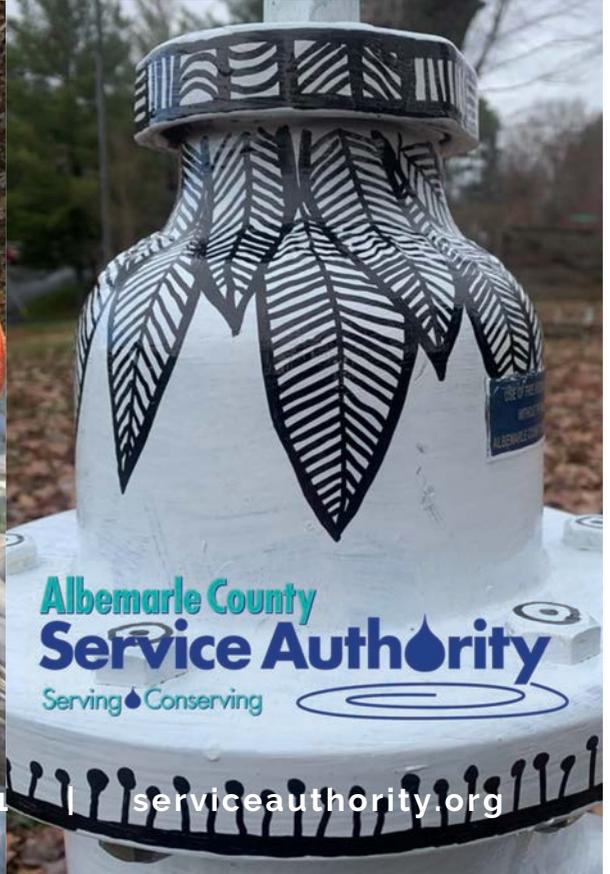


Finally, on our back cover, you will find hydrants painted as part of The Bridge Progressive Arts Initiative's "Art on Fire" program. The effort awards people to artistically paint fire hydrants so they can contribute a sense of unique identity and meaningful beautification.

The ACSA joined with The Bridge to take part, and a team of community members made the selections.

Nearly 80 dedicated, hard-working men and women work for the ACSA.

2020



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serviceauthority.org