



## UP THE CREEK March 1, 2009

March is the month of spring flushing. It's when we clean the winter's accumulation of rust and sediment out of our pipes by opening fire hydrants and flush valves and really creating a mess. It's annoying but necessary.

The consequences of pipeline flushing are positive, despite the warnings coming later on this page. A chronic issue in our water system (and many others like it) is the "age" or "residence time" of the water reaching your home. Water residing too long in the pipeline can develop poor flavor and other side effects. Flushing keeps the water fresh, and reduces the buildup of undesirable disinfection by-products such as haloacetic acid (HAA). I am pleased to report that our water has tested below the allowable level of HAA for the last three quarters, and that we are in compliance with State and EPA rules for this stuff. Regular pipeline flushing is a significant part of our strategy for remaining in compliance. We plan to install several more automatic flushing stations at dead-end points on the system.

Starting March 9<sup>th</sup>, we will follow a flushing plan that proceeds from the top (highest elevation) of our system to the bottom (lowest elevation). The process is supposed to proceed without too much disruption or disgust. But reality has a way of following its own plan, so you will undoubtedly know we are up to something in your neighborhood. In truth, there are some unavoidable consequences of pipeline flushing:

1. **Temporary low water pressure (or none).** Flushing seldom causes a disruption of service for more than 15 or 20 minutes, but there can be exceptions. It won't hurt to call our office to confirm that your problem is temporary.
2. **Water is discolored.** This will often be the case, and it's caused by air, dirt, and rust. If a glass of cloudy water clears up on its own, that's dissolved air, which is harmless and goes away eventually. If it stays murky, it is dirt/rust. Either way, you should do some flushing of your own pipes to dispel these leftovers. You should use large faucets, like outside hose connections. The faucets in your house don't run much water, and can plug up. You may need to clean your sink aerators after flushing.

Other possible consequences of pipeline flushing fall in the general category of "water rage," which can afflict people in times of great stress, for example in the shower when you get lathered up with the shampoo in your eyes, and you need to rinse **now** but there is a sudden silence followed by a sucking sound in the shower head. By the time you stumble to the phone to call the water company and your lawyer, the water starts running again, but it has a color that won't look good on you. Then the shower head plugs off with grit. That's when you will discover the limits of your patience. You can avoid all this by not bathing at all during the second and third weeks of March - the "ides" of March, from an old Greek word for "odors."

The flushing will start at Ute Trail Road, and progress southward down the Surface Creek valley, then across Cedar Mesa, Cactus Park, Dry Creek, and finally Redlands Mesa. Meter reading will begin March 18<sup>th</sup>. We will complete the flushing program a few days before meter reading starts, so that you will not incur a high water bill by flushing your own pipes.

If you call our office, we will predict roughly when you should expect flushing in your neighborhood. Unfortunately, we can't help you much with water rage. This is one of those things in life you just gotta deal with.