



## UP THE CREEK

August 1, 2010

### Wild Words

Up the Creek is regularly supplied with unsolicited literature which is (mostly) related to the water industry. It's all free, except for the requirement that we fill out and submit a long survey every so often. We meet this requirement by throwing the survey in the trash as soon as it appears. This works as well as actually filling it out and sending it back - we've tried it both ways, with identical results. The mags keep right on coming.

The content of these trade magazines is sometimes of interest to us, so we flip through them before they join the surveys on a trip to the landfill. The result of this casual perusal is sometimes very educational. We have learned that there is a small dictionary's worth of words that have gone feral and have taken on meanings that describe things we thought we already had good words for. Just a few examples:

**Line stop** – applies to a thing that looks just like a “valve.” We suspect this usage became necessary because there are already too many companies making valves. The logic might be that a new name will confer a brief marketing advantage. We would be happier if all these valve/line stop manufacturers would just get together and agree to make a device that actually opens and closes when you turn the top of it, without seizing up, breaking, leaking, or any other words that we have come to associate with “valve.” But maybe the word doesn't mean what we think it means.

**Custody transfer** – a phrase that used to belong to the ~~prison~~ correctional industry, but now applies to instruments that measure the transfer, in other words, “meter.” Custody transfer instruments can be made much more pricey than meters, hence the need for a new descriptive term. Actually, the concept of custody transfer has some attractions for Up the Creek. If custody of water is transferred from us to you at the thing previously known as a “meter,” then it's in your custody after that point. If you become disgusted or ill from using it, sorry; we wash our hands of it. And if said water should escape from your custody, causing the custody transfer instrument to spin and vibrate, the standard remedy is for you to transfer custody of your bank account to USCDWUA.

Sometimes wild words show up in wild concepts, as seen in this headline, “**Breaking Down the Dual Personality of Abrasion-Resistant Pipe.**” While we don't use abrasion-resistant pipe (there's not quite enough dirt in our water to require it), we are intrigued by the idea that pipes have dual personalities - even single personalities. A little research into personality types was undertaken by Up the Creek to learn what personalities our own pipes might have. Right away we stumbled across *extroversion* and *introversion*, and looked no further. The short translations are “outward turning” and “inward turning.” We know from experience that extroverted pipes are no fun. They behave like crazy drunks, and leave a mess. We prefer our pipes to hold it all in. We should revise our pipe specifications to read that all new pipeline material shall be required to demonstrate introversion.

We skimmed through the the whole article under the above headline. It listed some jobs for which abrasion-resistant pipe might be used, that is, after proper psychoanalysis. Included, along with carrying volcanic ash and ground glass, were sewage sludge and dog food. We understand, now, how a such a pipe could become seriously disturbed. And there's probably a lot of emotional stress on the custody transfer instruments too. That's why we prefer those to be extroverts. A little excess exuberance is a good thing in our meters. Keeps 'em sane.