



## UP THE CREEK

August 1, 2014

### Wild Words

**U**p the Creek is richly supplied with unsolicited literature, mostly related to the water industry. It's free, except for the requirement that we fill out and return a long survey every few months, on pain of losing our "subscription." We typically answer this requirement by throwing the survey in the trash, which works as well as actually filling it out – we've tried it both ways, with identical results. Stuff keeps right on coming.

The content of these trade magazines is sometimes of interest to us, so we flip through them before they head to the landfill. Occasionally, this casual perusal is educational. We have learned that there is a swarm of words that have gone feral, adopting meanings that describe things we thought we already had good words for. Just a few examples:

**Line stop** – applies to an object that looks just like a "valve." We suspect this usage is necessary because there are already too many companies making valves. It might be that the new name will bring a temporary marketing advantage to somebody. We would be happy 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 thing on the top of it, without seizing, breaking, leaking, or fostering the obscene terms that are often used with "valve." But maybe that word doesn't mean what we think it means.

**Custody transfer** – a phrase that once meant a happening at a correctional institution – in itself a feral term meaning "jail" – but now describing a device that measures water, known as "meter" in the old tongue. Custody transfer instruments can be made more technical and pricey than meters, of course. 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 point previously known as "meter," then it's in your custody after that point. If you become disgusted or ill from it, sorry; we wash our hands of it. And if said water should escape from your custody, causing the custody transfer instrument to sing and vibrate, the standard remedy is for you to transfer custody of your bank account to USCDWUA.

**Stakeholder** – used to be called "son," as in, "Hold this tent stake, son, while I drive it with the big hammer." Now used by governmental regulators in reference to people who get invited to rulemaking sessions for much the same reason as the example just given.

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 was undertaken by Up the Creek into possible pipe personalities. Right away we learned about *extroversion* and *introversion*. The short translations are "outward turning" and "inward turning." We don't want extroverted pipes. They are forever spilling their guts, which we find to be tedious. We prefer our pipes to hold it all in.

We found out that abrasion-resistant pipe is recommended for volcanic ash, ground glass, sewage sludge and dog food. We understand how a pipe in such service could become seriously disturbed. And there would be a lot of emotional stress on the custody transfer instrument too. That's why we prefer those devices to be extroverts. A little extra exuberance is a good thing in a water meter, we believe.