

Scituate Water FAQs – July 2023

How many brown water calls and emails have there been this summer?

There have been 64 emails and 71 calls, which is way down from last year. Reporting brown or discolored water is important – it's the only way the Water Department can get an accurate sense of what is happening in our system and address it. Please report all occurrences of brown water to brownwater@scituatema.gov or call 781-545-8735. Details are helpful – email a photo if you can, let them know if you've tried flushing via an outdoor spigot and for how long, etc.

How many fines or warnings have been issued for violation of our outdoor water use restrictions?

None so far. It has been a wet summer so demand has been relatively low. Learn more about our outdoor water use restrictions: <https://www.scituatema.gov/water-resources-commission/pages/outdoor-water-use-restrictions-faq>

How long should you run an outdoor hose or spigot if you are experiencing brown water?

If your water doesn't clear after 10-15 minutes of flushing, please contact the Water Department at 781-545-8735 so someone can come out and assess the situation.

Are gallons of water available at the Water Department? What about after hours?

The Water Department is open from 7am-3:30pm. Please contact them to report discolored water. Again, this is vital information for them to understand what's happening within the system and how to address it.

Does flushing improve water quality?

Flushing helps to get sediment out of nearby pipes, which improves water quality. However, since sediment does get stirred up in the process, water quality may appear worse for a short time after flushing before it clears up.

Does the town recommend any specific brands of water filtration for drinking and bathing?

The town does not provide specific water filtration recommendations. There are many popular and effective filters you can look into and assess what is best for your household's needs – from filtered water pitchers to whole house systems.

Is our water safe? How often is it tested and for what? How will we get notified if there are violations?

Scituate water is tested according to the MassDEP requirements. These are stricter than both the testing requirements for private wells and the FDA standards applied to bottled water. For example, public water sources must be tested weekly for bacteria. Additionally, our water operators test our water several times a day.

There is detailed information available online on MassDEP standards and testing – here are some helpful links:

- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2020-standards-and-guidelines-for-contaminants-in-massachusetts-drinking-waters/download>
- <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/faqs-standards-testing#:~:text=MassDEP%20requires%20your%20local%20water,local%20newspapers%20or%20radio%20stations.>
- https://www.monson-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf926/f/uploads/massdep_testing_requirements_for_public_water_systems.pdf

- <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/water-resources-laws-rules#dw>
- <https://www.mass.gov/lists/water-resources-laws>
- <https://www.mass.gov/lists/water-resources-regulations-and-standards>

Where can we find specific information on our town's water quality?

Annual Water Quality Reports are available on the town website – here is a link to the 2022 report: <https://www.scituatema.gov/water-division/links/2022-ccr-drinking-water-quality-report>. Hard copies of these annual reports can be requested through the Water Department.

What about PFAS?

Currently we meet all MassDEP guidelines for PFAS, which is set at no more than 20 parts per trillion (described as the equivalent of about 20 grains of sand on Peggotty Beach). All of Scituate's water sources test below this level.

I feel like I never know what's going on in town, like the status of the reservoir expansion project. How can I be better informed?

There are several ways residents can stay apprised of a variety of happenings, meetings, and project updates.

- Follow the Town of Scituate Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/TownofScituate>
- Sign up for email updates from town boards and committees:
<https://www.scituatema.gov/subscribe>. Please note that there are separate sections with individual checkboxes for news and announcements, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes. Most major issues come before the Select Board at some point, so signing up for the first 3 options listed (Town Clerk, Urgent Town Alerts, and All Town News) plus the Select Board meeting agendas and minutes is a good start. For water-related emails including flushing and water main break alerts, sign up for Water Division updates, Water Resource Updates, and Water Resources Commission agendas and minutes.

- Since the beginning of the Covid 19 emergency, Scituate has provided short weekly Town of Scituate News Updates. Those signed up for town emails receive a notification with links both to the video on YouTube and the transcribed text.
- You can also subscribe to Scituate Community TV's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ScituateCommunityTV/videos>, where you'll find the Town of Scituate Weekly News Updates, recordings of public meetings and cultural events, and Scituate Community TV's Scituate Weekly episodes.

How do I get my whites white again after experiencing brown water?

The Water Department has Rust Remover available for residents. If you notice staining on your whites, don't dry them, and soak them in this solution. Some residents have good luck with OxiClean as well.

Are the reservoir and Water Treatment Plant (WTP) used year-round?

Yes. During the peak period from late spring to early fall, the reservoir and WTP are used consistently. During lower-demand periods, they are run only twice a week as dictated by permit requirements. We minimize WTP use because it is outdated, fragile, and replacement parts and repairs are difficult due to reliance on older technology. When our new WTP is completed, we can run it all winter long, allowing our wells to rest and aquifers to recharge to assist with peak summer demand.

What's the latest update on our new Water Treatment Plant (WTP)?

The WTP is currently in the permitting phase, on schedule as per the timeline presented in 2022:

https://www.scituatema.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3781/f/uploads/project_and_permitting_timeline.pdf. The 8/10/23 Planning Board meeting will include a site update if you would like to attend or watch the recording. As stated on the

timeline, permitting will continue into the fall, and the town boards involved are the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Board of Health. You can sign up to receive their agendas and minutes at www.scituatema.gov/subscribe and/or watch meeting recordings on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/ScituateCommunityTV/videos>. Weekly Updates come out on Mondays and provide an overview of what meetings are scheduled for the upcoming week.

How much water is lost to leaky pipes?

Scituate's unaccounted-for water level has been brought below 9%, which is a big improvement and a better percentage than many surrounding towns. This is part of the reason that Scituate received a MassDEP Public Water System Award for conservation in spring 2023. Please help us keep this number on the downward trend by immediately reporting any suspected leaks to the Water Department.

Has the town considered desalination?

Yes. Much investigation is needed to determine whether desalination may be a viable supplemental source of water for Scituate during peak demand periods. A desalination exploratory subcommittee operating under the Water Resources Commission has been formed to research this option. Please contact wrc@scituatema.gov if you're interested in more information. At this time, desalination is not being considered on a large enough scale to replace any existing town water sources, just as a potential additional source akin to a new well.

Why have there been 3 water superintendents in the last 2 years and no communication from the town?

Scituate's water system is more complicated than many of our surrounding towns, partly due to the reliance on a combination of surface water and well

water. This provides amazing on-the-job training and experience for the right candidates, who should visit our website <https://www.scituatema.gov/town-administrator/pages/job-opportunities> to review current employment opportunities. The superintendents who have resigned had multi-year careers in our town and have moved on to other opportunities. We are grateful for their years of dedicated service and wish them well. We have high-quality staff who are able and willing to step up and share the workload when vacancies occur.

Why is the town not following the outdoor water use restrictions at Central Field? Irrigation was seen occurring at noon which is not allowed under our current restrictions.

Last year the town approved new baseball and softball fields for that location, and new sod was laid. New sod is only guaranteed if it remains wet during the initial brief but critical post-installation period. Our outdoor water use bylaw includes an exception for newly planted grass, though it is usually feasible to prevent that watering from occurring during the restricted hours of 9am-5pm. Residents should contact the Water Department for approval if they believe they qualify for this exception.

Can you provide information on what areas of town receive water directly from wells vs the WTP? Are there maps we can look at?

Mixing occurs throughout the system so it is hard to say that water from any one source serves only certain parts of town. The town gets its water from 6 wells and the surface water reservoirs at Greenbush. The latest Water Master Plan may help clarify

https://www.scituatema.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3781/f/uploads/scituate_2019_water_master_plan_final_draft-jan2021-report.pdf

There are areas in town now experiencing brown water (Hughey Road, for example) that never have before. What changed? And what is the status of the manganese contactor pilot study?

Our water system is quite complex and it is difficult to know why brown water occurs in specific areas at specific times. This is why it is so important to report all incidents of brown water (call 781-545-8735 or email brownwater@scituatema.gov) – otherwise the Water Department doesn't know it's occurring and can't investigate or fix it. Brown water can occur when there is a change in the direction of the flow of water due to any number of things including flushing, high nearby demand, pipe replacement, etc.

We tend to see much more brown water in the summer for several reasons, including: demand is significantly higher; we rely more on our surface/reservoir to meet this demand, and that water is treated at our outdated Water Treatment Plant which can't fully remove manganese; manganese levels increase as the reservoir water warms in the summer sun. The manganese contactor, which takes manganese out of the water, is up and running at the treatment plant and is helping, but it doesn't have the capacity to keep up with peak demand so some finished water is getting out to the system without going through it. The Water Department is looking into getting a second contactor, but the delivery time is currently 55 weeks. They are also working on getting an aerator running to try to help with this.

Where is the manganese coming from? What hazard does it pose to residents using the water?

There is manganese in the reservoir and in some of our wells, so it is present in multiple locations. Years ago, water was pumped from well 17a to the reservoir to try to dilute the manganese-rich water from the well, so we now have a high concentration of manganese in the reservoir. Manganese is a mineral that occurs naturally and is safe to ingest at certain levels – please

see the DEP guidelines for more information:

https://www.scituatema.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3781/f/uploads/manganese_fact_sheet_2022.pdf.

When is the next phase of pipe replacement? Where?

The town is currently replacing the water main and feeds on 3A in Greenbush. Bids will go out soon for Jericho Road as well as some of the side streets off of Hatherly(alphabet streets). We have replaced 30 miles of pipe in the last decade, which is fortunate because pipe costs have nearly doubled since Covid. Please contact the Water Department with specific questions.

Are only certain hydrants flushed? Does the town track where and when flushing is done?

The Water Department has mapped out unidirectional flushing and they have a book with all the gates to shut/open to accomplish this – it is a complicated and labor-intensive process that cannot be subcontracted out. They work an area in one direction, and then turn the flow around which improves the effectiveness of the flushing. The capacity to flush is limited by both water supply and staff availability. We can only flush when we have a surplus of water (in the fall or early in the spring), and when we have enough operators available to dedicate to this process. To flush all the pipes in town would take 4-5 staff 2 months and a whole lot of water, so we have to prioritize flushing the areas with the worst water quality each year.

What purpose do the two standpipes provide?

They provide water pressure for fire protection.

Will a rebate be available to people who have ruined laundry? How would someone go about this?

Call Town Hall or email the Town Administrator or Select Board to discuss a potential rebate. You can sign up for email alerts at the town website www.scituatema.gov/subscribe.

How often do we measure water usage and rainfall?

Water usage and rainfall are measured daily by our water operators.

Why are people experiencing bleaching on dark laundry?

I can't think of what in the town water would cause that.

**THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SUBMITTED QUESTIONS. IF YOU
WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL THE WATER
DEPARTMENT 781-545-8735 OR CALL DPW 781-545-8732
<https://www.scituatema.gov/departments-of-public-works>**