sew´·ẽr sō·ci·ōl´o·gy, *the science of society, social institutions, and social relationships viewed through the eyes of a sewer; specifically the systematic study of the development, structure, interaction, and collective sewer use of organized groups of human beings.*

Dribble Down the Drain

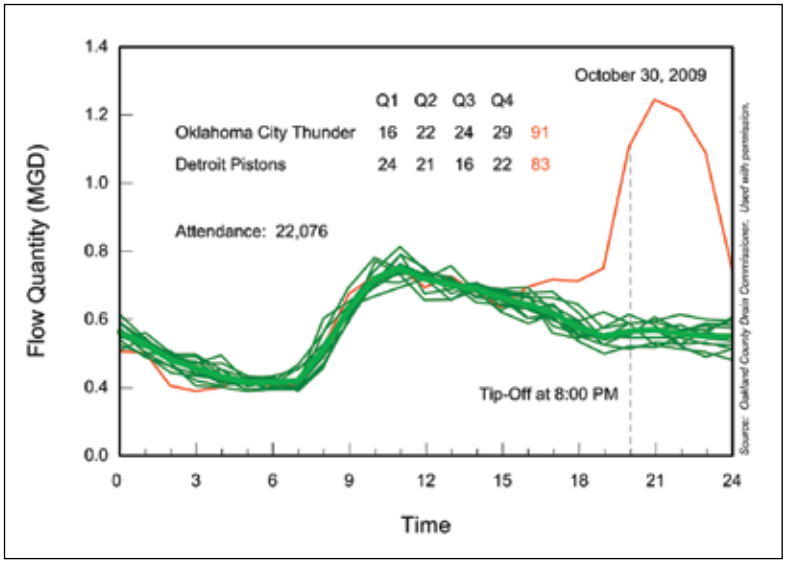
Kevin L. Enfinger and Patrick L. Stevens

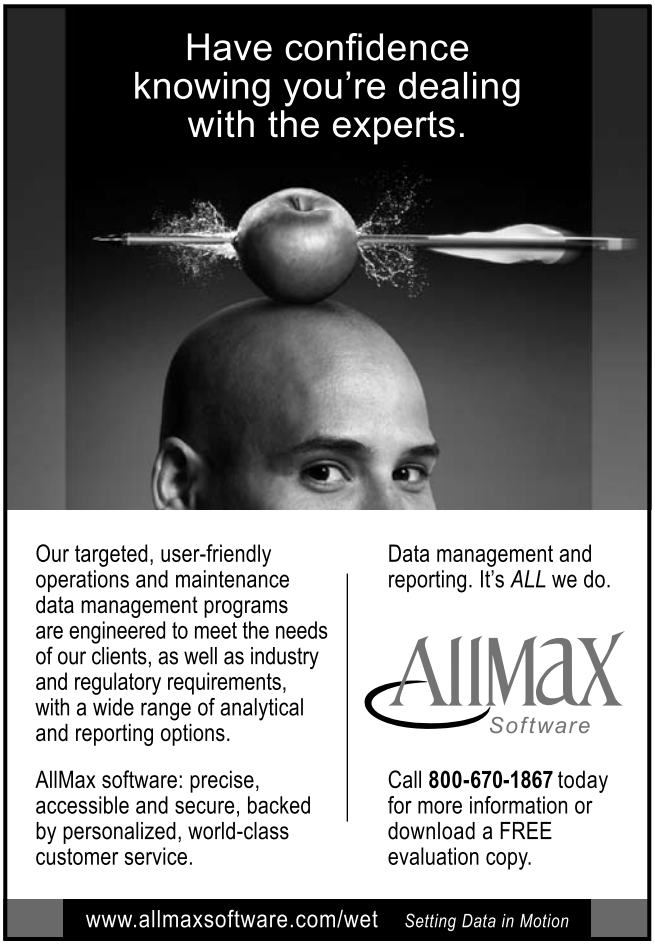
Most sewer flows are characterized by repeatable diurnal patterns that vary across weekdays, weekends, and holidays. Differences in land use also are apparent, and distractions and disruptions of daily life often can be observed. This month, we take a look at a professional basketball game from the eyes of a sewer.

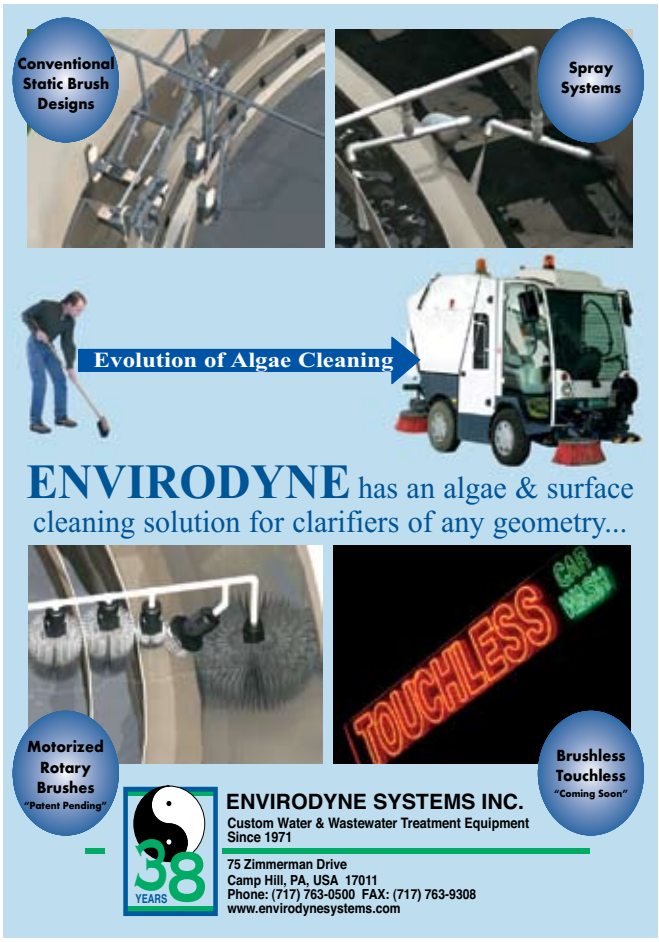
The figure to the right shows a composite hydrograph from a flow monitor located downstream from the Palace of Auburn Hills, the home of the Detroit Pistons. Weekday flows are shown in green, and the flow from the home opener of the 2009–2010 season is shown in red.

Activity at the arena begins about 3 p.m. on game day and increases dramatically

Detroit Pistons 2009 Home Opener







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through tip-off. More than 22,000 fans were on hand to cheer the Pistons but left disappointed after a 91–83 defeat to the Oklahoma City Thunder.

During the past few years, we, the Sewer Sociology authors, have gathered many examples from many different sporting events, including baseball and football games, tennis matches, and horse races. If you would like to share flow monitor data from other sporting events with the Sewer Sociology community, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at magazine@wef.org and include Sewer Sociology in the subject line.

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Looking Ahead

Coming up in the June issue …

Looking Elsewhere

Unique challenges and new situations often require skills and advice that fall outside of the municipal wastewater industry. Clever professionals know that sometimes solving a problem at home requires looking elsewhere.

For example, instead of giving up on an ambitious grit pumping project plagued by clogs, a New Jersey utility looked for help in the mining industry. Using the knowledge and experience of a trade that pumps rock slurries hundreds of miles led to a clog-free solution.

The information technology industry is another partner that can help water utilities perform better. As technology surges forward, customers are resetting their expectations for responsive customer service from ground-based timeframes measured in days to electronic response times measured in minutes, if not seconds. Find out how to what Web 2.0 tools — such as Twitter, blogs, and texting — can do for you.

Defining Good Practices

Establishing a solid foundation for everyday practices alleviates common headaches and ensures quality practices.

When repairing and replacing collection systems, standard practices are essential. Especially when bypasses are used to reroute flows around work areas. Learn the essential elements for designing a safe and effective bypass pumping system.

Ultraviolet disinfection is another area of wastewater treatment that could benefit from some standardization. Methods used to size ultraviolet systems vary among manufacturers and make clear comparisons difficult. But one group of researchers is moving toward a single standardized protocol. Discover what steps they've taken so far.

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