Sewer U

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sew´·ẽr sō·ci·ol´ō·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.*

Most sewer flows are characterized by repeatable diurnal patterns that vary across weekdays, weekends, and holidays. Differences in land use are also apparent, and distractions and disruptions of daily life can often be observed.

Last month, we took a look at wastewater flows from a middle school in Texas. This month, we continue our educational theme and look at wastewater flows from a university campus located in Virginia.

A composite hydrograph from a flow monitor located downstream from the campus is shown in the figure below. Weekdays are shown in green, and weekends are shown in blue.

During the week, wastewater flows begin to increase at about 5 a.m. as the campus comes to life. Most classes are done by early afternoon, and wastewater flows settle down throughout the remainder of the day.

Weekends show a distinct difference. The data reveal a delay in the typical morning increase in wastewater flow – direct evidence of on-campus residents sleeping in during the weekends.

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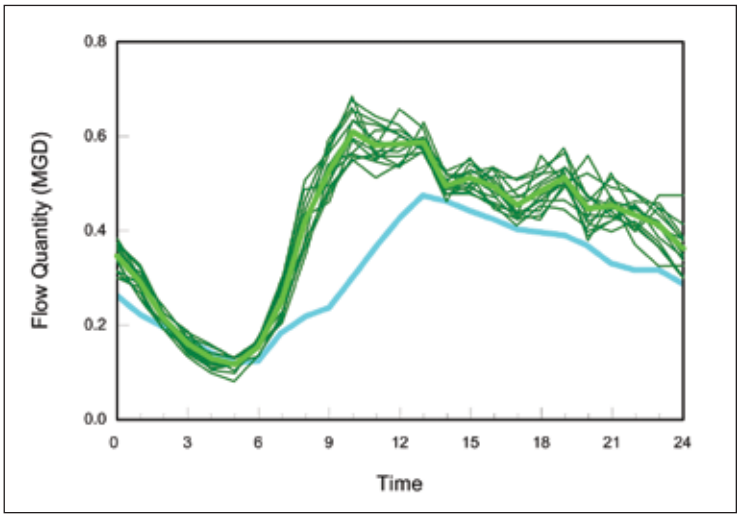
Sewer use pattern at a university



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