



OFFICE OF  
THE BOARD OF

# Water & Sewer Commissioners

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## Unusual Smell and Taste of the Water Supply

It's no coincidence that the Water Department has been receiving smell and taste inquiries recently. The August and September rainfall totals were much higher than normal - possibly the highest ever recorded for the respective months. The Somerset Reservoir is supplied by multiple, natural, surface water sources. These fresh water sources eventually flow into the Labor in Vain Brook, which directly feeds our reservoir. The Segreganset River is the main non-direct water source for Somerset. Water from the Segreganset is pumped to the reservoir at certain times of the year. Runoff, which is the water resulting from rainfall and snow melt, runs off land, roofs, paved surfaces, etc. to the Labor in Vain tributary system. The water then flows all the way to our reservoir located behind the Water Treatment Facility located at 3249 County Street in Somerset.

As the runoff makes it way to the river and, finally, to the reservoir, it may pick up the taste and smell of the terrain that it travels across. Typically, callers mention an "earthy" taste and/or smell to the water that is like grass, dirt, and vegetation. This earthiness is understandable given the nature of runoff. The high number of runoff-producing storm events this year has exacerbated the taste/smell issue over the typical, drier, summers. Testing performed by the Water Department, at locations where taste and/or smell have been reported, indicates that the water is in compliance with applicable standards. Another known contributor to taste/smell issues is water temperature. The higher the water temperature, the higher the probability for taste/smell issues. August and September of this year have been warmer than usual. Daily testing shows that the reservoir temperature is still at 70°F. As the temperature drops with the onset of Autumn, the taste/smell issues will abate.

The Somerset Water Department is happy to test at all locations where taste and/or smell issues are reported. It is our desire to ensure that our customers have an abundance of clean, safe water. Please contact our office at 508-674-4215 with questions or to request water testing.

Finally, portions of our Water Distribution System are over 100-years-old, and our Water Treatment Plant needs upgrading to meet future water quality standards. The Somerset Water Department is planning to make substantial capital improvements to our system. Said improvements are not optional and must be made to ensure that our water quality complies with all standards and will continue to meet the needs of our customers both now and in the future.

Paul A. Sylvia, P.E.  
*Superintendent of Water & Sewer*