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ABAG'S "BE SEWER SMART" BACKUP PREVENTION CAMPAIGN GETS SMARTER WITH ADDED WEBSITE PLANTING GUIDE RESOURCE

BAY AREA HOMEOWNERS CAN NOW ACCESS ONLINE "SEWER SMART" TIPS FOR TREE AND OTHER FALL AND WINTER PLANTINGS

Oakland -- The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) today announced the addition of a "*Sewer Smart Planting Guide*" page to its award-winning public service campaign Website, "Be Sewer Smart." The new Webpage, at www.sewersmart.org/plantguide.html, offers information for homeowners to help them avoid causing expensive and inconvenient sewer backups when making additions to their home landscaping.

High on the list of causes of the hundreds of sewer backups and overflows that damage Bay Area homes annually are blockages and other damage caused by roots in sewer lines. Presented in partnership with the California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers (CANGC), the City of Oakland's Public Works Agency and other ABAG member communities, the "*Sewer Smart Planting Guide*" is designed to help Bay Area homeowners make Sewer Smart planting decisions.

ABAG estimates that it costs local homeowners and their communities as much as \$20 million annually to undo the damage caused by such backups. Most of these backups occur during the northern California rainy season, which coincides with the fall and winter planting seasons. Each backup prevented can save from tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars in cleanup costs in a single home – a good reason to be "Sewer Smart" when it comes to planting.

"The what, where and when of tree planting are important considerations for homeowners this time of year. Working together, communities and homeowners can avoid the many problems that can occur as plantings take root," said Raul Godinez, Director, City of Oakland Public Works Agency. "The '*Be Sewer Smart Planting Guide*' Website is a great resource for homeowners to find planting and maintenance tips, including those of the City of Oakland tree program, and links to catalogs of Sewer Smart trees and shrubs."

"A little research can help homeowners avoid significant and extremely disruptive problems as today's plantings grow and share yard space with hidden, underground utilities tomorrow," said Buzz Bertolero, past president, California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers. "In addition to the certified nursery professional at your favorite nursery or garden center, the information provided on the '*Be*

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Sewer Smart Planting Guide’ makes it a great place for homeowners to find planting and maintenance tips and links to detailed catalogs of Sewer Smart, and not so Sewer Smart, trees and shrubs.”

“Among the many important considerations to be made when selecting home landscaping additions, interference with underground utilities is often overlooked. To achieve a successful, long-lived and trouble free planting, the ‘*Be Sewer Smart Planting Guide*’ Website is a good place to start,” said Walt Hagen, chairman of the board, California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers. “Our certified nursery professionals in nurseries and garden centers throughout the Bay Area are pleased to support this important community service and stand ready to provide further advice to homeowners to help them make their fall and winter planting endeavors successful.”

ABAG’s “Be Sewer Smart” campaign targets homeowners whose most important investments may unknowingly be at risk of backup. It seeks to make these homeowners more aware of such events, their responsibilities in maintaining sewer lines, and “Sewer Smart” tips for avoiding problems. In addition to the Sewer Smart Planting Guide, the campaign makes information and risk assessment tools available through www.sewersmart.org. Among these tools, a simple five-question online test helps homeowners determine the likelihood of experiencing a backup and suggests actions to take to avoid them.

Campaign Background and Sponsors

“Be Sewer Smart” is a public education campaign of the Association of Bay Area Governments’ Pooled Liability Assurance Network (PLAN) Corporation. The campaign is designed to help homeowners become more aware of and understand the risks and responsibilities related to the potential of sewer backups into their homes. Ultimately, the goal of the campaign is to prevent such backups and the damage and inconvenience they can cause.

ABAG PLAN Corporation is a non-profit corporation whose purpose is to benefit the citizens of Each ABAG member community by establishing a stable, cost-effective self-insurance, risk sharing and risk management program for each member. The PLAN was formed in 1986 and currently has 31 member cities and towns in the Bay Area. It provides liability and property coverage as well as a variety of risk management services such as training, claims management, loss prevention and consulting services. For more details, visit www.abag.ca.gov/plan.

The Association of Bay Area Governments is one of more than 560 regional planning agencies across the nation working to help solve problems in areas such as land use, housing, environmental quality, and economic development. Founded in 1961, ABAG is the regional planning agency for the 101 cities and towns, and nine counties of the Bay Area and is recognized as the first council of governments in California. Visit www.abag.ca.gov for more information.

The California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers is a professional organization dedicated to

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the promotion and advancement of the nursery industry for its members and the public it serves. For more information, visit the CANGC Website at www.cangc.org.

Other program participants include the Peninsula Builders Exchange (www.constructionplans.org) and the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors of Contra Costa and Alameda Counties (www.phccacc.org).