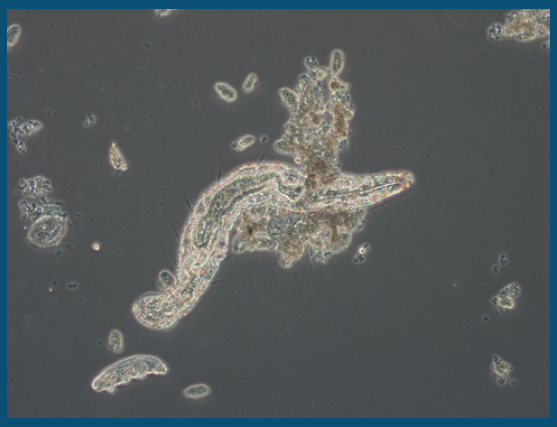
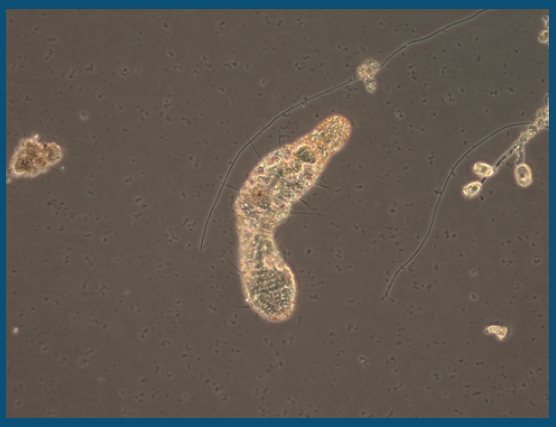
WASTEWATER BUG SPOTLIGHT
BRISTLE WORM

Bristle worms, as they are commonly known, belong to the Annelid phylum, which also includes other segmented worms such as earthworms and leeches. As the name implies, bristle worms are long, cylindrical organisms that are covered in hair-like bristles. Bristle worms commonly have bright pink spots which can cause the El Estero Water Resource Center's activated sludge to turn a reddish color.

Bristle worms can grow up to 1 cm in length which is large enough to see with the naked eye. Bristle worms reproduce by "budding" off segments of their body to produce a new worm. They use their tell-tale bristles to navigate wastewater in search of food.

The presence of bristle worms can often indicate key characteristics of the water that they inhabit. For example, they are very sensitive to ammonia and often only appear in the presence of high nitrate levels. Bristle worms graze on the bacterial population in sludge and biofilms. In doing so, they enhance oxygen penetration and promote healthy microbial growth which can contribute to an exceptional treatment process.





Bristle worms found under the microscope at the City's El Estero Water Resource Center, magnified x100.

El Estero
WATER RESOURCE CENTER

For more information on wastewater treatment visit www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/ElEstero