
TOWN OF CLARKDALE PRESS RELEASE

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Clarkdale Reaches Major Milestone with New Wastewater Treatment Plant

Clarkdale, AZ (April 11, 2013) – The Town of Clarkdale reached a major milestone when their new wastewater treatment plant began start-up operations this week. Although official dedication of the facility is still a few months away, the start-up is the culmination of decades of planning by the Town. The new plant has a 350,000 gpd capacity and uses a mLE process – modified Ludzak – Ettinger. It provides biological stabilization of the wastewater and biological removal of nitrogen without using any external chemicals, and will produce Class A+ effluent. The plant replaces the Town’s former lagoon treatment system which had a 250,000 gpd capacity, produced a Class B effluent and did not remove nitrogen.

According to Town Manager Gayle Mabery, “Effluent quality is the most important aspect of this project.” The Town of Clarkdale has faced hurdles for decades due to the lower quality of effluent that the old plant produced. That lower quality reduces the number of viable options for effluent disposal. Many people remember that the Town used to flood irrigate its effluent on the mine tailings deposit out near Tuzigoot National Monument. When it became evident that the excess water at that site was causing issues with seeps along the Verde River, the Town worked with Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold (formerly Phelps Dodge Corporation) and was finally able to move the effluent from that site to its current spray irrigation site near the old smelter site in 2009. Even now, however, spray irrigation is not a beneficial use for the effluent. Mabery noted, “Class A+ effluent will finally give the Town the opportunity to consider sustainable re-use of this valuable resource. The most attractive option, and the one that the Town Council favors, is to develop a groundwater recharge project that will allow the Town to recycle the effluent and improve water availability in Clarkdale. The higher quality of effluent can also be permitted to be discharged into Verde River tributaries, like Bitter Creek or Deception Wash.”

After years of struggling to find ways to finance the new plant, Clarkdale finally put the package together through a combination of developer contributions, low-interest financing (with a 2.19% interest rate for 20 years through the State's Water Infrastructure Finance Authority-WIFA), customer rate increases, and an inventive approach to design. Clarkdale actually purchased and refurbished the Desert Oasis Wastewater Treatment Plant after it was decommissioned in another community. The plant had been operating in the City of Surprise as a temporary plant until the City's new regional wastewater treatment facility came on-line. According to Clarkdale Utilities/Public Works Director Wayne Debrosky, "Because it was a "used" wastewater treatment plant, the cost of the plant itself was minimal and more than 85% of Clarkdale's project costs were the result of permitting, engineering, site development and the decommissioning of Clarkdale's existing wastewater treatment plant. When the project is complete, Clarkdale's cost will be in the \$14.29-15.71 per gallon range, or between \$5,000,000-\$5,500,000 in total costs. Because smaller plants like ours lose the economy of scale compared to plants that treat millions of gallons per day, this is a very competitive price."

The current project also included the up-sizing of several components so that the site is ready when increases of wastewater flows necessitate expansion of the plant. Two additional 350,000 treatment systems can be accommodated at the current site, allowing for a total ultimate treatment capacity of 1,050,000 gallons per day. Finally, the Town will also realize a long-term goal on the wastewater treatment plant property in the creation of a river access site. With the layout of the new plant, the Town will be able to extend a trail system off the current Benatz Trail that will meander along the Verde River and lead to riverfront pocket park locations. Crews from the Vetraplex Company (who operate a job/skills program for veterans) are poised to begin work to remove invasive plants species at the site in the next month as a result of a grant that the Friends of the Verde River Greenway received through the Walton Family Foundation.

The current approach to this project has been in the works since late 2010, and there have been many milestones along the way. For Mabery, who has been involved with discussions about upgrading the wastewater treatment plant for the 21 years that she's been with Clarkdale, it is almost unreal. "This is such an important step forward for the Town of Clarkdale. While the additional capacity of the plant certainly positions the Town to add some new customers to the system, the most important benefit is the resolution of our long-standing effluent quality issue. It's been clear for a long time from the State's environmental regulatory agencies that Clarkdale had to get our effluent quality issues addressed, regardless of whether we added one new customer or not. Financing the project has always been the hurdle for Clarkdale. We are really proud of the creative approach to design that finally allowed us to construct something that would produce A+ effluent at a more affordable cost than had ever been an option."

For more information about the Town of Clarkdale's wastewater treatment plant upgrade project, contact Utilities/Public Works Director Wayne Debrosky at (928) 639-2525 or email Wayne.Debrosky@clarkdale.az.gov