



City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

City Hall
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Meeting Agenda - Final Council Planning Meeting

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers
400 La Crosse Street

This meeting is open for in-person attendance and will also be available through video conferencing. The meeting can be viewed (no participation) by visiting the Legislative Information Center Meetings calendar (<https://cityoflacrosse.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>) - find the scheduled meeting and click on the "In Progress" video link to the far right in the meeting list.

Call to Order

Roll Call

Tamra Dickinson, Erin Goggin, Barb Janssen, Larry Sleznikow, Olivia Stine, Christine Kahlow, Gary Padesky, Mackenzie Mindel, Aron Newberry, Jennifer Trost, Crystal Bedford, Lisa Weston, Rosanne Northwood

AGENDA:

[26-0169](#)

Presentation by the Utilities Department regarding the City's water, sanitary sewer and storm water utilities.

Adjournment

Notice is further given that members of other governmental bodies may be present at the above scheduled meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision-making responsibility.

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

Requests from persons with a disability who need assistance to participate in this meeting should call the City Clerk's office at (608) 789-7510 or send an email to ADAcityclerk@cityoflacrosse.org, with as much advance notice as possible.



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Text File

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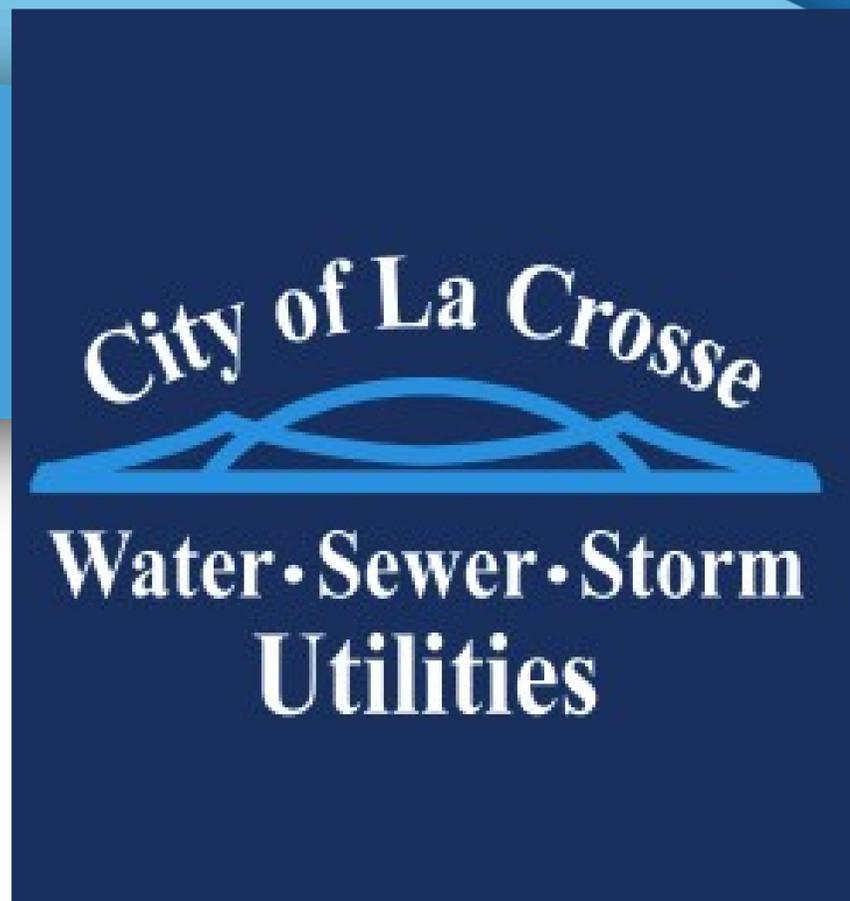
In Control: Council Planning Meeting

File Type: Report

Agenda Number:

LA CROSSE UTILITIES BUSINESS OFFICE

Water, Sewer & Stormwater
Performance, Operational and
Financial Review
March 2026



Tina Erickson, Utilities Finance & Compliance Manager

WATER, SEWER, AND STORM WATER UTILITY HISTORY

**Pre-
1997**

THERE WAS ONLY A WATER UTILITY PRIOR TO 1997. ALL SEWER AND STORMWATER FUNCTIONS WERE PAID THROUGH PROPERTY TAXES.

1997

THE SEWER UTILITY WAS CREATED IN 1997 AND THE COST TO OPERATE WAS REMOVED FROM THE PROPERTY TAX ROLL. NOW ALL USERS PAID FOR SERVICE.

2012

THE STORMWATER UTILITY WAS CREATED IN 2012. INITIALLY, ALL CAPITAL EXPENDITURES WERE STILL SHARED EQUALLY BETWEEN THE CITY AND UTILITY. IN 2022, THE UTILITY BEGAN FUNDING 100% OF CAPITAL PROJECTS.

WATER UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

222 MILES OF WATER MAIN

- sizes 2" to 24"
- oldest main installed in 1890

3,174 DISTRIBUTION VALVES

- all turned every 3 years

2,009 FIRE HYDRANTS

- all flushed 2x per year

16,866 WATER SERVICE LATERALS

- sizes 3/4" to 10"

16,446 WATER METERS

WATER SUPPLY FACILITIES

2 RESERVOIRS

- (1) 5 mil gal built in 1913
- (1) 150,000 gal built in 2011

1 BOOSTER PUMP

10 WATER SUPPLY WELLS

- 94 feet to 162 feet deep
- maximum of 34.7 million gallons per day available pumpage

Approximate 2024 Assets Value = \$61,014,977

SEWER UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

COLLECTION SYSTEM

198 MILES OF SEWER MAIN

- sizes 8" to a 52" x 78" elliptical pipe
- oldest main installed in 1882

3,722 SEWER MANHOLES

27 SANITARY LIFT STATIONS

- used to move wastewater from lower to higher elevations when gravity is not available

44 SEWER ONLY METERS

- Mostly in industrial and commercial facilities

WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

- Avg of 9.5 gallons of wastewater is treated each day
- The process takes about 24 to 36 hours to convert sewage into clean water that can be safely returned to the environment
- This process is complex, and includes steps like screening and settling out solids, biological treatments and disinfection
- All solids are processed into biosolids are disposed of via land application or other approved methods

Approximate 2024 Assets Value = \$126,200,000

STORMWATER UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

153 MILES OF STORM MAIN

- sizes 8" to a 10" x 12" box pipe
- oldest main installed in 1936

3,321 STORM MANHOLES

- vertical underground access points to storm mains

7 STORMWATER LIFT STATIONS

- used to move excess rain water from lower to higher elevations when gravity is not available

6,499 CATCH BASINS

- grated underground drainage structure designed to collect storm-water runoff from streets and parking lots while trapping debris, sediment, and pollutants

320 STORM OUTFALLS

- Where stormwater runoff is discharged to a local body of water

Bioretention cells and other Best Management Practices (BMP's) are also in place to help control runoff and improve water quality

Approximate 2024 Assets Value = \$126,200,000

WATER, SEWER AND STORMWATER UTILITY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

AGING AND INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Many components of the water, sewer, and stormwater systems were constructed decades ago and are nearing the end of their lifespan. It is crucial to engage in proactive replacement and rehabilitation to avoid failures, ensure reliability, and safeguard water quality. The stormwater system was built without consideration for needs.



Goal: Replace 1% of mains annually (100-year cycle)

Statistic	Water	Sewer	Storm
Miles to replace to meet 1% per year goal	2.10	1.90	1.30
Avg miles of main replaced last 5 years	1.37	1.44	1.77
% of Mains over 100 years old	30%	22%	0%
% of Mains over 80 years old	43%	32%	10%

- Average cost of 1 mile of 8" cast iron main in 1924 was \$12,000 to \$16,000
- Average cost of 1 mile of 8" cast iron main in 2024 was between \$1.3 and \$1.5 million

WATER, SEWER AND STORMWATER UTILITY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

New regulations for PFAS, Nitrates, and other emerging contaminants require additional monitoring, treatment planning, and infrastructure investment to ensure continued delivery of safe, compliant drinking water and wastewater.



- **Regulators are continually improving drinking water and wastewater treatment standards in light of advancing scientific research.**
- **New contaminants such as PFAS and updated water quality regulations require utilities to expand their testing, evaluate treatment solutions, and, in certain cases, construct new facilities. These investments are vital to maintaining the safety and compliance of our water supply.**

WATER, SEWER AND STORMWATER UTILITY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & RETENTION

Recruiting, training, and retaining skilled operators and technical staff is essential for the safe operation of complex distribution, collection, and treatment systems, as well as for ensuring regulatory compliance.



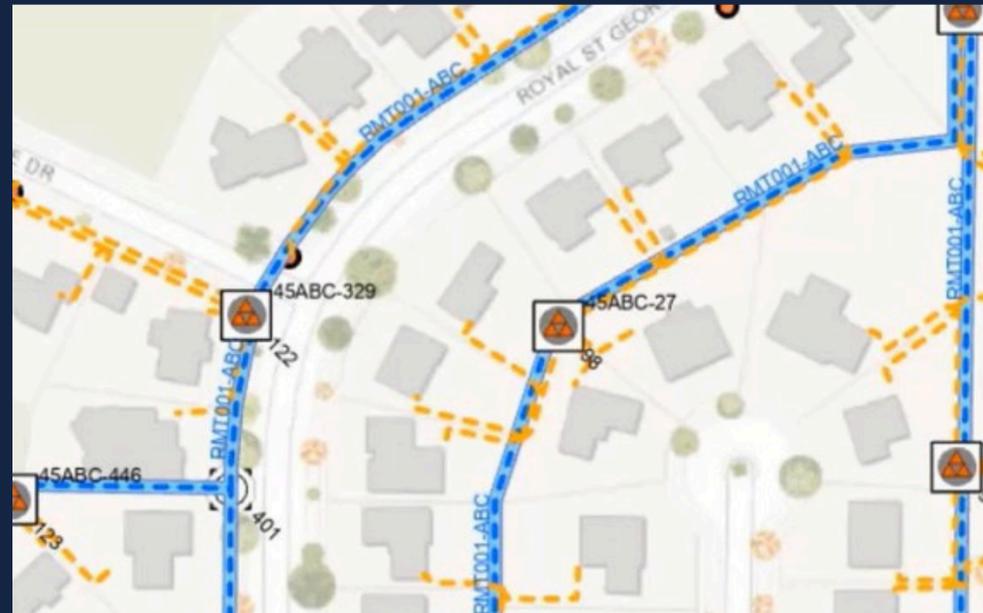
The three utilities currently employ around 64 full-time equivalents.

- **Managing water, sewer, and stormwater utilities requires licensed professionals equipped with specialized technical knowledge and skills.**
- **The certification standards are quite stringent.**
- **We are dedicated to investing in training and workforce development to ensure we maintain the expertise necessary for the safe and reliable operation of our systems.**
- **Retaining qualified staff is a key component of workforce development, which can be accomplished through competitive compensation, opportunities for career advancement, and a supportive work environment.**

WATER, SEWER AND STORM STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Investments in SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition), GIS (Geographic Information Systems), and cybersecurity enhance system monitoring, asset management, operational efficiency, and the safeguarding of critical infrastructure.



- Technology is crucial for the effective management of today's water, sewer, and stormwater systems.
- SCADA upgrades enable operations to monitor wells, pumps, and treatment facilities in real-time.
- GIS systems assist us in mapping and tracking infrastructure, planning replacements, and responding to emergencies more efficiently.

WATER, SEWER AND STORMWATER UTILITY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

CUSTOMER SERVICE, PUBLIC EDUCATION AND FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Utilities throughout the United States are presently navigating a “perfect storm” of challenges. They must balance the urgent need for critical infrastructure upgrades with the need to maintain affordable customer rates. This situation calls for enhanced community engagement and proactive communication with customers to foster trust through value and reliability.



- The increasing costs associated with infrastructure repairs and regulatory compliance are necessitating rate hikes that exceed the growth of household incomes.
- Escalating bills have a disproportionate effect on low-income families and senior citizens.
- It is crucial we find ways to build trust, as many of us tend to take these essential, often invisible, services for granted until an issue arises.

WATER SYSTEM INTERESTING FACTS

NO WATER TREATMENT PLANT

Right now, La Crosse draws water directly from the aquifer and adds only minimal treatment at the well. With new contaminant regulations coming, a full treatment facility is being planned.

NO WATER TOWER

La Crosse is nestled between bluffs and the river, creating a distinctive environment. This unique landscape allowed us to construct a reservoir within the bluff, eliminating the need for a water tower.

NATURAL WATER PRESSURE

Due to the height of the reservoir on the bluff, it generates sufficient pressure throughout the system, reducing the necessity for booster pumps.

WATER SYSTEM PUMPING & WATER QUALITY STATISTICS 2024

WELL PUMPING AND WATER TREATMENT OVERVIEW

- **20,651 hours of pumping**
- **3.119 billion gallons of water pumped**
- **27,300 pounds of chlorine used**
- **7,920 gallons of fluoride used**
- **\$317,626 in electricity costs for pumping**

WATER QUALITY OVERVIEW

- **837 water samples tested**
- **2,009 fire hydrants flushed**
- **1,223 cross connection control inspections completed between contractor HydroCorp and Utility Staff**

**Pumping & Water Quality Staffing Consist of
6.5 Full-time equivalent employees**

WATER SYSTEM PUMPING & WATER QUALITY STATISTICS 2024

DISTRIBUTION OVERVIEW

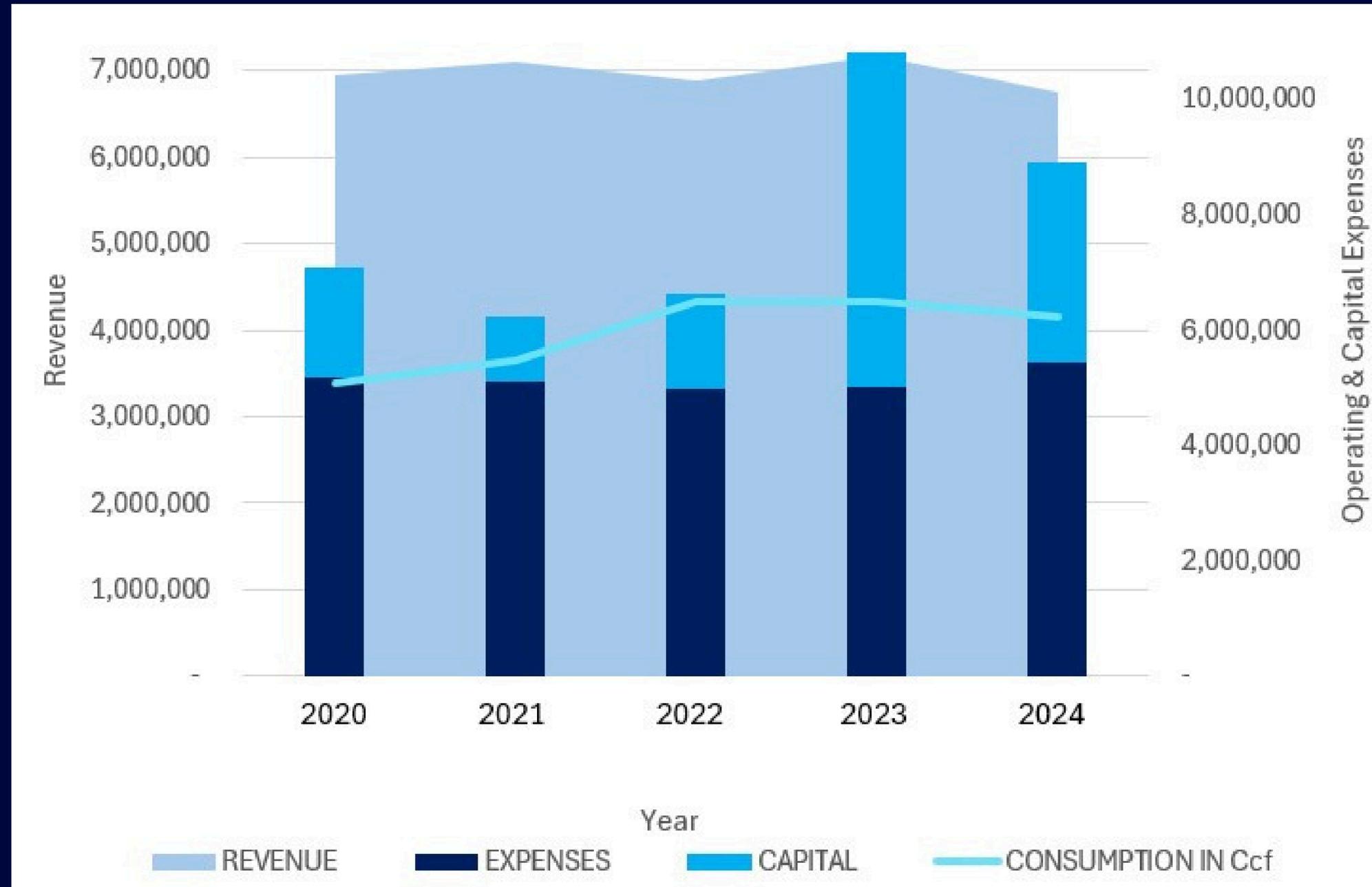
- **7 water main breaks**
- **33 water valves repaired**
- **11 water valves removed/replaced**
- **18 fire hydrants repaired**
- **1,212 water valves operated/exercised**

WATER SERVICE LATERAL OVERVIEW

- **73 water services repaired**
- **195 water services removed**
- **248 water services installed**
- **1,402 hours of staff time responding to after hours call outs or emergencies for both distribution and water supply.**

**Distribution Staffing Consist of
15.25 Full-time equivalent employees**

WATER UTILITY 5-YEAR FINANCIAL SUMMARY



- **Capital expenditures began increasing in 2023 to meet investment goals to replace aging infrastructure.**
- **Water rates unchanged since 2019; revenues down due to 17.5% drop in consumption since 2021.**
- **Expenses stable but vary annually due to factors like testing, repairs, and maintenance.**

SEWER SYSTEM INTERESTING FACTS

ONCE A COMBINED SEWER/STORM SYSTEM

La Crosse's original sewer infrastructure was constructed as a combined system, meaning stormwater runoff and sanitary wastewater were conveyed together before later separation projects were completed.

REGIONAL TREATMENT FACILITY

The La Crosse Wastewater Treatment Plant serves as a regional treatment facility, providing wastewater treatment services for the City of La Crosse and four surrounding municipalities.

SEWER UTILITY PAYS FOR 50% OF WATER METER EXPENSES

Water utility meters measure the incoming water supply, typically directed to the sanitary sewer. The water utility covers all meter expenses, with the sewer utility reimbursing 50% at year's end.

SEWER SYSTEM STATISTICS 2024

PRE-TREATMENT & TREATMENT OVERVIEW

- **11 permitted industries**
- **11 industrial inspections**
- **41 industrial samples taken/tested**
- **9.5 million gallons per day of influent treatment**
- **4,394,470 gallons of septic, holding tank & grease trap waste received**

BIOSOLIDS REVIEW

- **2,396 metric tons of biosolids produced**
- **1,810 metric tons of biosolids land applied**
 - **On 1,123 acres of land**
- **48 metric tons of biosolids landfilled**
- **11 metric tons disposed of by other methods**

**Wastewater Treatment Staffing consist of
16.6 Full-time equivalent employees**

SEWER SYSTEM STATISTICS

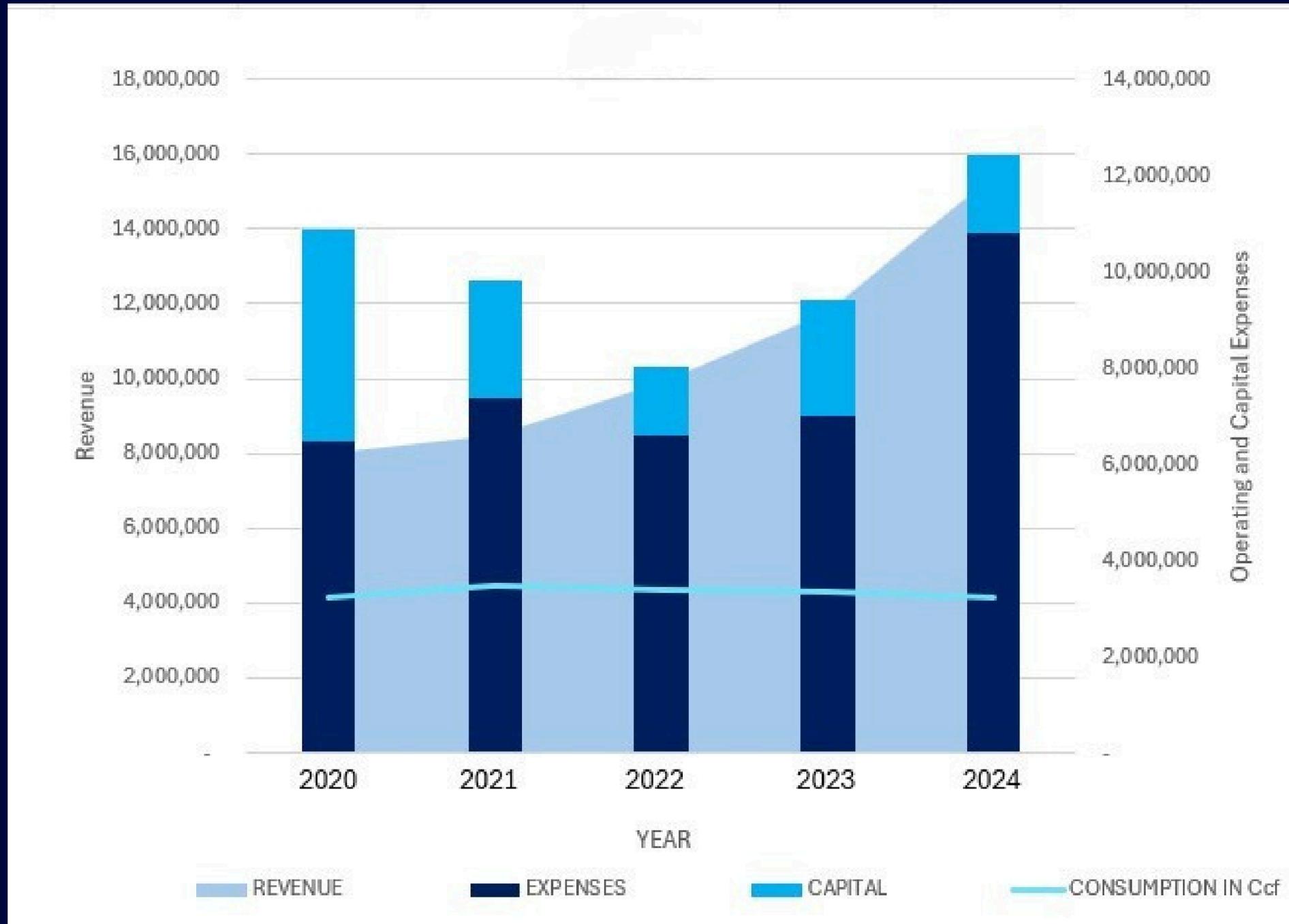
2024

SEWER COLLECTION SYSTEM

- 104 maintenance visits per lift station
- 35.82% sewer mains cleaned
- 9.97% sewer mains televised
- 1.15% root removal
- 2.23% sewer manholes rehabbed
- .04% sewer main rehabbed
- 2,387 hours of staff time responding to after hours call outs or emergencies in the collection system or at the plant
- 12 basement sewer backup responses
- 0 SSO/Overflows Reported

**Sewer Collection Staffing consist of
5.8 Full-time equivalent employees**

SEWER UTILITY 5-YEAR FINANCIAL SUMMARY



NOTE: THE \$68 MIL PLANT UPGRADES IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE CAPITAL TOTALS ON THIS CHART

- A \$68 million upgrade to the plant commenced in 2020 and is scheduled for completion in 2025.
- Sewer rates rose by 10.8% in 2020, followed by additional increases each year since 2022 in anticipation of the new plant processes.
- Following the implementation of new processes in 2024, expenses increased by 65.72% compared to the previous year.

STORMWATER SYSTEM INTERESTING FACTS

MS4 PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Compliance with La Crosse's MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) permit is a city-wide effort. The Stormwater Utility coordinates, while key departments manage specific programs: Street Department cleans and maintains streets, Inspection Department handles erosion control, and Engineering manages infrastructure and post-construction pollutant reduction.

WHEN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER FLOODS

At a Mississippi River stage of 10 feet, the stormwater utility starts its flood mitigation protocols, deploying pumps and managing gates to disconnect part of the stormwater system from the river. At 12 or 13 feet, the system north of the La Crosse River is fully isolated, requiring street water to be pumped out. This increases labor demands due to four-hour pump inspections and continuous monitoring to prevent flooding in homes and businesses in that area.

STORMWATER SYSTEM STATISTICS 2024

STORMWATER COLLECTION SYSTEM

- **7 full catch basins replacements**
- **21 catch basins patched**
- **76 catch basins adjusted**
- **407 catch basins cleaned**
- **1.97 miles of storm mains cleaned**
- **4.84 of storm mains televised**
- **16 hours of staff time responding to after hours call outs or emergencies in the field or at lift stations**

**Stormwater Collection Staffing consist of
5.8 Full-time equivalent employees**

SEWER SYSTEM STATISTICS

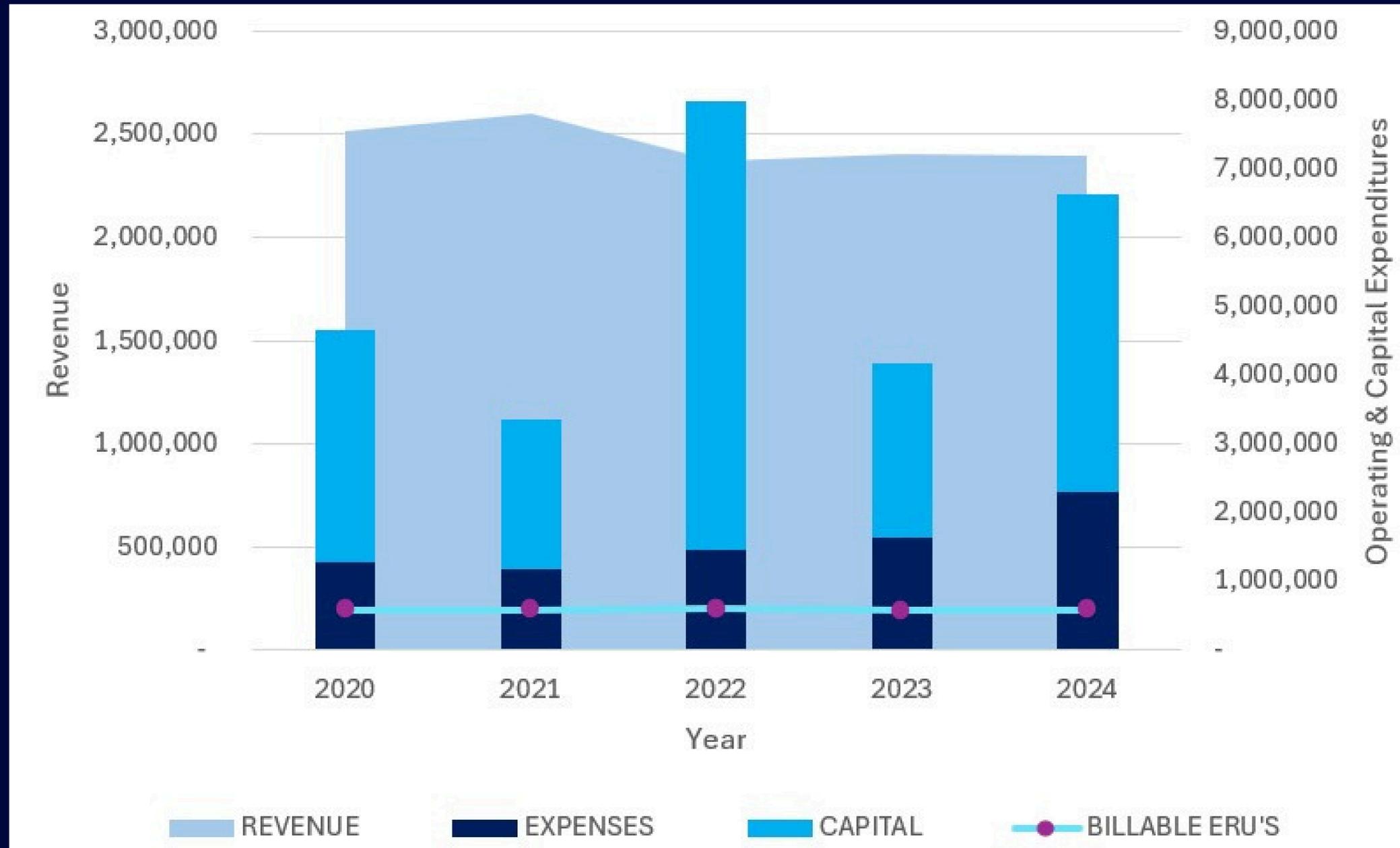
2024

MS4 PERMIT ACTIVITIES

- **368 stormwater outfalls inspected**
- **9 illicit discharges investigated**
- **20 new stormwater BMP's (Best Management Practices) inspected**
- **171 public stormwater BMP's inspected**
- **40 public stormwater BMP's maintained**
- **171 public stormwater BMP's inspected**
- **4,993 tons of material collected from street sweeping**

**Stormwater MS4 Activity Staffing consist of
2.75 Full-time equivalent employees**

STORMWATER UTILITY 5-YEAR FINANCIAL SUMMARY



- The Stormwater Utility took on full responsibility for all capital projects in 2022. Prior to that, certain projects were shared equally with the City.
- In 2024, the utility officially began to cover all costs associated with stormwater functions that were previously subsidized by sewer utility or city funds.
- Between 2024 and 2025, stormwater rates underwent a two-phase increase.

OTHER UTILITY RELATED FACTS

The Water, Sewer and Stormwater Utility are all municipally-owned entities that operate solely on revenue from services provided, receiving no direct tax dollars from the City.

TAX PAYMENT TO THE CITY

State regulations require the Water Utility to pay the City of La Crosse a “tax equivalent” based on its infrastructure value, ensuring it supports the municipality like a taxed entity. This does not affect the Sewer or Stormwater Utility.

OFFICE RENT & CITY SERVICE PAYMENTS TO THE CITY

Wisconsin law treats municipal water utilities as business entities in a proprietary role rather than just a government department. The utility covers office rent and pays for municipal services like legal, HR, payroll, and engineering. This allows the city to charge the utility for using shared city hall space and operations instead of subsidizing them. Additionally, the utilities contribute a percentage toward the City Plumbing Inspector and the Directors of Engineering and Public Works.

UTILITIES BUSINESS OFFICE

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Utilities Business Office houses staff who support the water, sewer and stormwater utilities.

Utilities Office billing & customer service staff collaborate with other utility team members located at the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and Water Distribution Offices (Myrick). This includes the administrative, regulatory compliance, financial and customer service aspects of water, sewer and stormwater services. Additional financial support is housed at the WWTP and Myrick where staff bill out for non-metered revenue such as damage claims, bulk water sales & wholesale sewer services. In addition, these staff members assist with processing payroll and manage accounts payable and work order processes and more.

UTILITIES REVENUE, COLLECTIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

UTILITY BILLING & ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

Key duties include reviewing meter read data, auditing usage, handling account setup or transfers, processing billing, calculating final bills for property sales, and auditing records for accuracy. This includes managing numerous account changes related to the significant number of rental properties in La Crosse.

CUSTOMER SERVICE & COMPLIANCE

Key duties include responding to inquiries about bills, service questions, potential leaks & water quality concerns. Staff collaborate with water utility staff to manage the DNR required cross-connection control program and the tracking of numerous dta points for regulatory reporting.

UTILITIES BUSINESS SERVICES STATISTICS 2024

UTILITIES BILLING OVERVIEW

- **Managed 19,424 metered and stormwater accounts**
- **Processed a total of 77,697 bills; with 1/3 of our customers billed each month**
- **Manages 17,353 parcels and monitors for changes to impervious surface for stormwater billing purposes**
- **Processed 1,413 final bills for account changes**

CUSTOMER SERVICE & COLLECTIONS

- **Managed scheduling and follow up processes for 3,061 customer service call**
- **Mailed and managed phone calls for 3,352 delinquent accounts as part of the tax roll process**
- **Oversee approximately 300 Landlord/Tenant Agreements**
- **Answering calls and responding to emails related to the 19,424 billed accounts**

**Utilities Business Services staffing consist of
8.2 Full-time equivalent employees paid by all three utilities**

LA CROSSE WATER UTILITY - REVENUE CHARGES ON THE BILL

CHARGE	FEE TYPE	CALULATION METHOD	EXPENSE RECOVERY
Water Fixed	Fixed	Based on meter size	Operational costs such as metering & customer service, and capital costs
Water Usage	Variable	Based on water measured by meter	Variable operational costs like electricity and labor
Public Fire	Fixed	Based on meter size	Costs of water to fight fires and to ensure the water system has capacity to fight fires

LA CROSSE SEWER UTILITY - REVENUE CHARGES ON THE BILL

CHARGE	FEE TYPE	CALULATION METHOD	EXPENSE RECOVERY
Sewer Fixed	Fixed	Based on meter size	Operational costs such as metering & customer service ,and capital costs
Sewer Usage	Variable	Based on water measured by meter	Variable operational costs like electricity and labor

DID YOU KNOW?

Residential customers receive an automatic credit on sewer charges for bills issued between July and December if their consumption exceeds either their average winter usage or 20 Ccf, whichever is greater. This explains why a customer might see a higher water consumption on their December bill compared to their March bill, yet the March bill could end up being more expensive.

LA CROSSE STORM UTILITY - REVENUE CHARGES ON THE BILL

CHARGE	FEE TYPE	CALULATION METHOD	EXPENSE RECOVERY
Storm Fixed	Fixed	Varies depending on property type	Planning, maintenance and construction of stormwater facilities to manage the quantity and quality of storm runoff

Stormwater charges are based on the Equivalent Runoff Unit (ERU) for a property. One ERU is defined as the average total impervious surface of a residential parcel as of the 2010 study, which was 2,841 square feet.

- Residential properties are assigned one (1) ERU.
- Non-Residential properties are assigned ERU's based on the actual impervious surface in square feet, divided by 2,841 (carried to the nearest .1)

Credits may be available to customers who have stormwater treatments on site pursuant to the Storm Water Credit Policy.

SAMPLE UTILITY BILLS AT JANUARY 2026 RATES

USER TYPE	METER SIZE	CCF (GALLONS)	QTRLY BILL	AVG MONTHLY COST	AVG COST PER GALLON
COMMERCIAL	2"	50 CCF OR (37,400 GALLONS)	\$392.65	\$130.88	\$0.02
INDUSTRIAL	4"	3,075 CCF OR (2,300,100 GALLONS)	\$13,480.57	\$4,493.52	\$0.01
RESIDENTIAL	3/4"	20 CCF OR (14,960 GALLONS)	\$178.94	\$59.65	\$0.01
RESIDENTIAL	3/4"	8 CCF OR (5,984 GALLONS)	\$121.54	\$40.51	\$0.02

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT

GIS & ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Utilities GIS Specialist collaborates with field staff and other key staff members to optimize the entire lifecycle of water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure. This position develops processes and procedures

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Utilities Project Specialist works closely with the Engineering Department and manages various utility projects from conception to completion, providing technical reviews, manages professional service contracts and oversees contractor work.

Utilities GIS staff and project managers (PM's) are foundational to asset management. Together, they bridge the gap between day-to-day maintenance and strategic infrastructure sustainability by transforming raw infrastructure data into actionable, costs-effective, and safe operational strategies. This data is critical in improving long-term capital planning, budgetary control, and operational improvements.

WATER METER & SERVICE TECHNICIAN STATISTICS 2024

SERVICE TECHNICIAN OVERVIEW

- Completed over 3,060 service orders and requests for utility customers
- Exchanged, installed or removed over 385 meters
- Tested 2,344 meters,
- Scrapped 1,197 meters
- Located, marked and worked over 280 curb boxes at customer or plumber request
- Completed 151 leak investigations in customers homes or businesses
- Completed 390 cross connection control inspections and miscellaneous service requests

Meter & Service Technician staffing consist of
3.0 Full-time equivalent employees

Management of Utility Finances

The responsibility for managing utility finances primarily lies with the Utilities Finance & Compliance Manager, who operates under the supervision of the Director of Engineering & Public Works. This focused financial management of utility-specific operations is crucial due to the oversight of the accounting processes for the water utility by the Public Service Commission (PSC) of Wisconsin. Additionally, the sewer and storm utilities also have unique accounting functions, as they are specifically designed to support rate development.

Distinct Accounting Functions

Many utility accounting processes differ from the conventional GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) accounting practices followed by the City's Finance Department. While our financial statements are often converted from the PSC-based financial reports to GAAP for inclusion in the city's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), the Water Utility daily, operational books are kept in accordance with PSC regulations, while other specialized processes exist for sewer utility to assist with setting rates for wholesale customers.

UTILITIES FINANCE & COMPLIANCE MANAGER KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

UTILITY BILLING & CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGEMENT

- **Plan, organize, direct and supervise staff across various roles, including:**
 - **Customer Service**
 - **Meter Reading**
 - **Billing**
 - **Collections**
- **Oversee the DNR-required Cross-Connection Control Program in collaboration with HydroCorp.**
- **Assist with communication and contract compliance for wholesale sewer contracted communities.**

ACCOUNTING & COMPLIANCE MANAGEMENT

- **Collaborate with utility management to create the annual operating budget and a 5-year financial forecast.**
- **Work alongside utility management and Engineering to formulate the 5-year capital improvement budget.**
- **Prepares rate application for water evaluations and support consultants during rate assessments for sewer and storm.**
- **Direct operations to meet PSC and other regulatory requirements.**

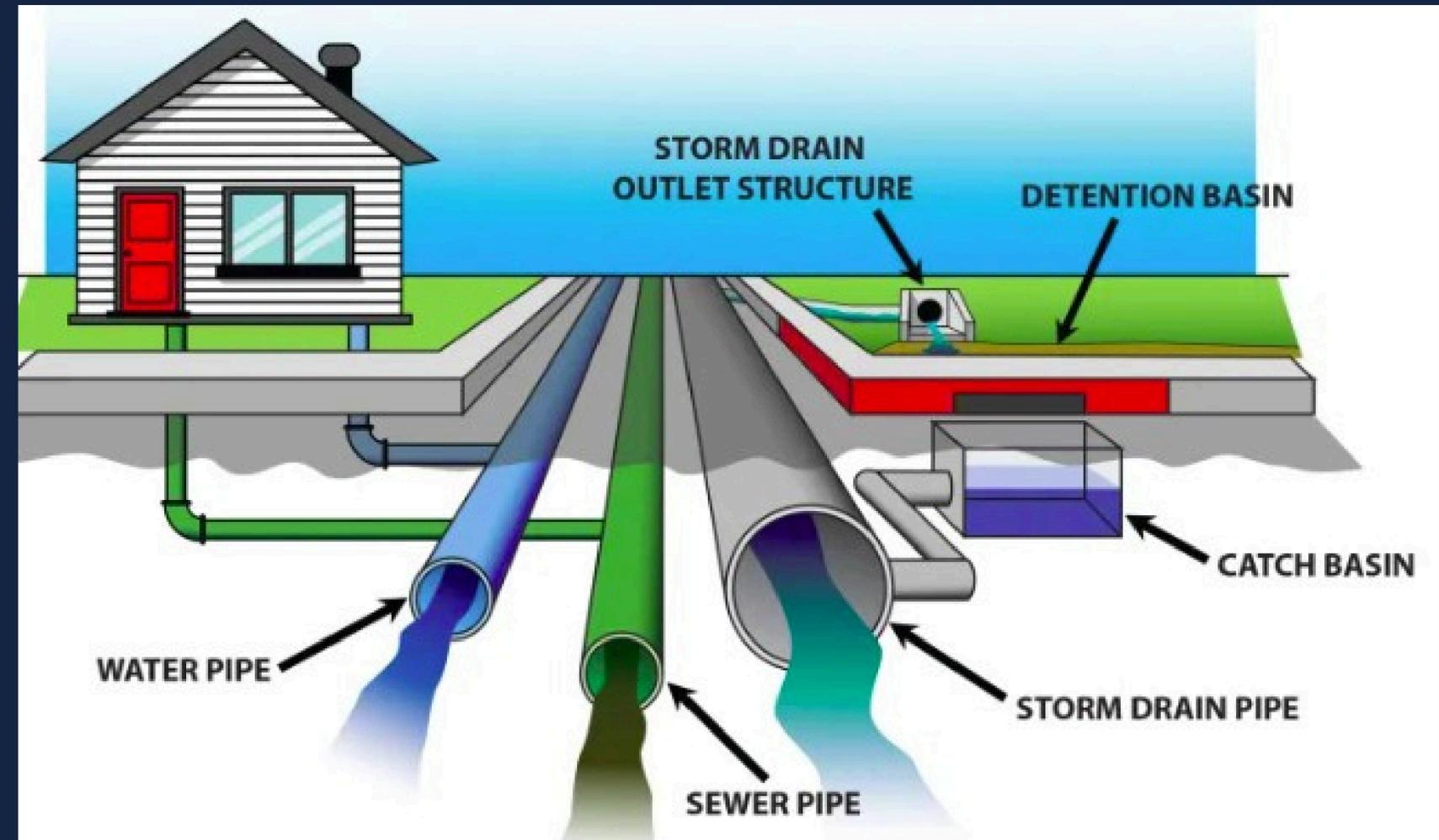
WATER, SEWER AND STORMWATER

EVOLVING UTILITIES CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Utilities capital improvement plan is in a constant state of evolution as utilities navigate a swiftly changing environment. This landscape is marked by:

- Aging infrastructure
- Stricter regulations
- Climate-related risks
- Needs from other public works divisions
- Increasing costs

The transition from a traditional, reactive, age-based replacement strategy to a proactive, risk-informed investment approach requires continuous updates to planning, modeling, and prioritization.



WATER, SEWER AND STORMWATER

ADDRESSING UTILITY FUNDING CHALLENGES

When allocating funds for projects, utilities must carefully assess the balance between debt, grants, and cash-funded initiatives to minimize the effect on customer rates.



The goal is to finance small-scale or short-term capital assets with cash to avoid interest costs. For large infrastructure projects, borrowing is an essential funding tool to spread costs over time and ensure fairness for future customers. One funding source includes state-managed low-interest revolving loan funds that have the potential to offer principal forgiveness for up to 70% of a project based on a score given to each project application.

Thank You

**WE APPRECIATE
YOUR TIME**

**Tina Erickson - Utilities Finance
& Compliance Manager on behalf
of the entire Utilities Team**

Email

utilities@cityoflacrosse.org

Phone

608-789-7536

STORMWATER UTILITY UPDATES

JANUARY 2026

MS4 ANNUAL REPORT

- March 31st Deadline
- 2024 Audit follow-up, updates to:
 - SWMP
 - Utility Map
 - SWPPPs
- Ongoing efforts to meet 20% TSS reduction
 - Currently at 17.2%

PERMIT CONDITIONS

- Public Education & Outreach
- Public Involvement & Participation
- Illicit Discharge Detection & Elimination
- Construction Site Pollution Control
- Post-Construction Stormwater Management
- Pollution Prevention
- Stormwater Quality Management

2025 STORMWATER UTILITY OVERVIEW

- 391 BMPs Inspected
- Maintenance Completed on 39 BMPs
 - Inlet Sediment Removal
 - Pond Inlet Dredging
 - Vegetation Management
- 8 Illicit Discharges Reported
- 8 Construction Projects Completed
 - New BMPs Approved

SEASONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

In Collaboration with Parks & Rec and La Crosse Area Waters:

- Salt Smart
- Grow Green
 - Previously No-Mow May
- Soak It Up
 - Rain Barrel Workshop
- Leaf It

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: RENEW THE BLOCK

- LAW / Habitat for Humanity

<https://www.lacrosseareawaters.org>

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipMOP3_rQ_5eCAXqbC42Y9p7p_mAfXarOyXYh9qzUmJ_iLS6nX-EbQRpzuYiAGJM7A?key=U2g0M0FZWC1IYV9DUXVmeIpsNkdOaEhSaC15WUpB

- Logan Middle School & Avon Street Homes
- Rain Garden, Fruit Trees, Outdoor Classroom Space
- Student & Staff Participation



RENEW PHOTOS



SOAK IT UP AWARD, EDUCATIONAL SIGN

LA CROSSE AREA WATERS



LaCrosseAreaWaters.org

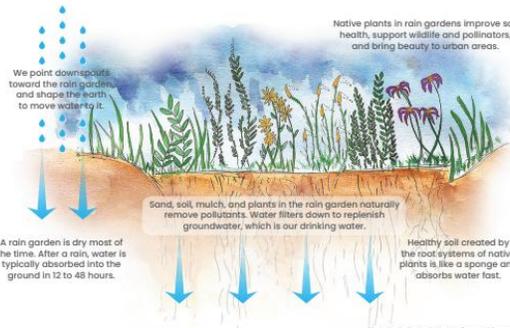
SOAK IT UP

RAIN GARDENS AND NATIVE PLANTS

HOW DOES A RAIN GARDEN WORK?

Rain gardens are shallow depressions (swales) filled with native plants. They capture, absorb, and filter stormwater runoff from roofs, parking lots, or roads. The rain garden at Logan Middle School captures stormwater and allows it to soak into the ground instead of rushing into storm drains. As water moves through the soil and the deep root systems of native plants, pollution is naturally filtered out. This helps keep dirty runoff out of our rivers, lakes, and streams while allowing clean water to refill our underground water supply, called groundwater.

Native plants also attract pollinators, improve soil health and structure, absorb nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen, and bring beauty to school grounds.



We point downspouts toward the rain garden, and shape the earth to move water to it.

Native plants in rain gardens improve soil health, support wildlife and pollinators, and bring beauty to urban areas.

Sand, soil, mulch, and plants in the rain garden naturally remove pollutants. Water filters down to replenish groundwater, which is our drinking water.

A rain garden is dry most of the time. After a rain, water is typically absorbed into the ground in 12 to 48 hours.

Healthy soil created by the root systems of native plants is like a sponge and absorbs water fast.

Illustration by Brooke Kubicki, La Crosse, Minnesota



YOU ARE HERE

CAN YOU FIND THESE NATIVE PLANTS?



PORCUPINE SEDGE

With its spiky seed heads that look like little porcupines, *Carex hystericina* is a cool-looking grass-like plant. It helps trap sediment, clean water, and hold soil in place—making it a key part of keeping stormwater clean.



RIDDLES GOLDENROD

A rare find, *Solidago riddellii* blooms late in the season with golden flowers that feed migrating butterflies and native bees. This goldenrod thrives in moist soil and plays an important role in supporting pollinators when other plants are winding down.



PURPLE-HEADED SNEEZEWEED

Don't let the name fool you—this plant won't make you sneeze! *Helenium flexuosum* blooms in late summer with purple-centered yellow flowers that attract bees and butterflies. It grows well in wet areas and adds a bright pop of color to the rain garden.



OBEDIENT PLANT

This tall plant, *Physostegia virginiana*, gets its name because you can gently bend its flowers and they'll stay in place. With its pink spikes of blooms, it attracts hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies. It's a little bit of fun.

This rain garden was installed as part of Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region's ReNew the Block project, with support from La Crosse Area Waters and made possible by 360 Real Estate. It helps protect local waterways, supports pollinators, and provides learning spaces for students and the community.




2026 PROJECTS AND GOALS

- Continue Working with Consultant on Utility GIS Upgrades
- Raise Awareness & Encourage SW Credit Applications for Green Infrastructure
- Increase SW Social Media Outreach

QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFO

Claire Jablonski

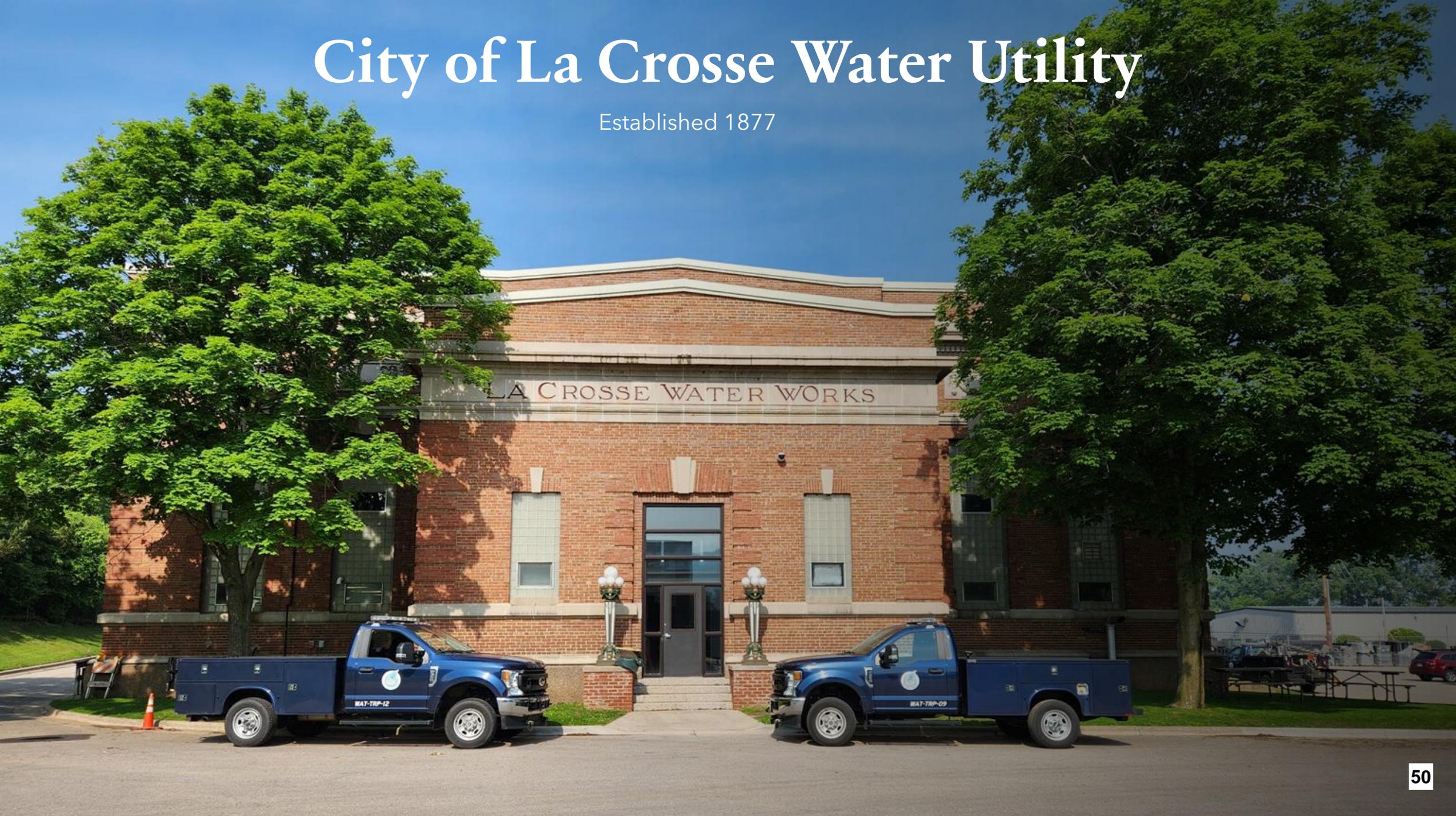
Stormwater Coordinator

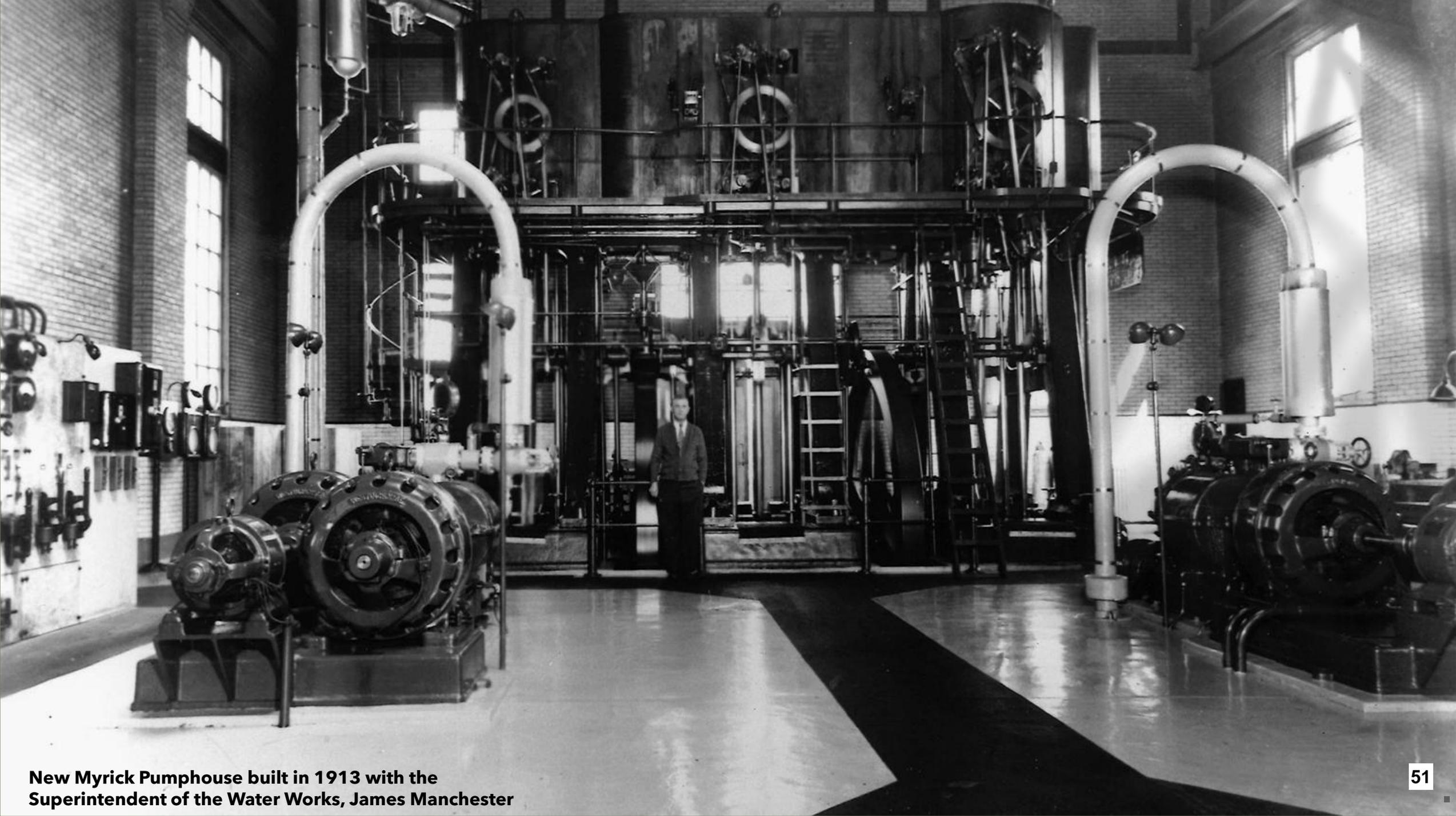
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City of La Crosse Water Utility

Established 1877





New Myrick Pump house built in 1913 with the Superintendent of the Water Works, James Manchester

Historical Events

1877

- City Council agreed to supply the City with water

1880

- The King Street Pumphouse was brought online at a construction and operation cost of \$81,257
 - It brought in 2.5 million gallons of water daily from the Mississippi River to supply 273 taps

1913

- The Myrick Pumphouse was brought online at a construction and operation cost of \$53,128
- The King Street Pumphouse was retired
- The Grandad Reservoir (currently active and holds 5 million gallons of water) and the Myrick Reservoir (now demolished and could hold 1 million gallons of water) were brought online at a total cost of \$90,952
 - All were fed from the La Crosse Marsh Well Field (Marsh Trail) that consisted of six (6) pumps with four (4) siphons each that were all powered by two (2) coal boilers

1937

- Well 10H (now retired) was installed in Hood Park and became the first remote well in the City

1939

- La Crosse Water Works became a Utility and separated water revenue funds from the City's tax funds

1947 - 1955

- Ten (10) more high service wells were installed
- All wells were now being treated with chlorine

1960

- Myrick Pumphouse converted to electric driven pumps capable of producing 15,600 gallons per minute and averaged eight (8) million gallons per day

1960 - 1970

- Wells 1 through 9 (pre-1936 wells located in or along the marsh) were retired to improve water quality

1970

- A second high service reservoir is recommended for fire protections, pressure, and redundancy

Historical Events Continued

1986

- Well 26 was brought online
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the Wellhead Protection Program in the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974

1988

- The City of La Crosse Residents voted in the usage of fluoride in the drinking water supply

1990's

- A cathodic system was installed on County Road B to combat corrosive soils and to protect the water main

1998

- The DNR recommends the Myrick Reservoir no longer be used due to safety concerns

2003

- The booster station was installed to feed Waterford Valley

2008

- The 24-inch water main was installed on Bliss Road as a redundant feed to the Grandad Reservoir

2009 - 2010

- The Mormon Coulee Reservoir (SE Reservoir) was installed with a holding capacity of 150 thousand gallons
 - For comparison: one (1) foot of depth in the Grandad Reservoir is 250 thousand gallons

2012

- The Cross Connection Control (CCC) and Meter Exchange Program was established

2018

- The Myrick Reservoir (retired in 1998) is demolished, and a Utility garage is built in its location

2019

- La Crosse was declared optimized with the Lead and Copper Policies of the EPA
- An unknown contaminate was detected at the French Island Wells 23, 24 and 26
 - The contaminate was later determined to be PFAS
- Wells 23 and 24 were no longer used as active wells and kept inactive due to high PFAS Levels

Recent and Current Events

New Large Utility Garage as of 2025



2021

- Well 26 produced water for the last time and made inactive out of caution due to PFAS even though it was under the MCL at the time

2023

- The State Street 20-inch water main broke under the BSNF railroad tracks
- The Grandad Reservoir power pole line was moved from overhead to underground

2024

- Wells 23 and 24 were cut and capped and no longer attached to the water supply
- A deep engineering study was launched into Grandad's structural health
- Well 22 was offline for nine months due to a mechanical failure
- A preventative maintenance program was established for the wells and reservoirs
- Myrick Pumphouse experienced an indoor generator fire

2025

- Wells 19, 20, 21, and 25 had their motor and pump brought up to date
- The Wellhead Protection Plan and Ordinance was created and adopted for the City
- The Grandad Reservoir was determined to be leaking water into its valve pit
- Well 24's wellhouse was demolished
- Well 26 was abandoned and no longer attached to the water supply
- The wellhouse for Well 26 was transferred to the Wastewater Utility for onsite storage
- Myrick began more inhouse water testing due to changing Federal regulations
- Myrick Pumphouse begins planning its 3rd rehabilitation since it was constructed in 1913



La Crosse Water Utility

- Supply -

- The La Crosse Water Utility provides consistent safe drinking water at some of the lowest rates in the State with an average cost of \$52.05 per quarter or \$0.004 per gallon.
- Each night we fill the Grandad Reservoir with roughly five million gallons of water. The City consumes this water the following day and the cycle begins again providing fresh water every single day.
- If our wells ran for 24-hours, we would be able to produce 35 million gallons of water. The daily average consumption is 9 million gallons.
- Every 30 hours the Southeast Reservoir is refreshed with more water to maintain pressures in the Waterford Valley area. The Southeast Reservoir is fed daily by the main system and the Grandad Reservoir.
- In 2025, the Water Department performed over 700 required water testing samples and many more non-required investigative testing to ensure water quality.
- Ten high-capacity wells are inspected daily to ensure functionality and over 650 preventive maintenance items are individually tracked for different replacement and cleaning cycles.

Well 16 Pump Being Pulled in 2025



La Crosse Water Utility - Distribution -

- The Water Utility maintains over 16,800 water services, 3,000 valves, 2,000 hydrants, and 220 miles of water main.
- We are on-call 24/7/365 no matter the weather conditions
- Each of the 2,000 fire hydrants are flushed a minimum of once per year to clear out any scaling and buildup in the water mains.
- Each fire hydrant is checked weekly during the winter to ensure none have frozen and are ready to use in the event of an emergency.
- One third of the City's water valves (1,000) are turned and exercised each year to ensure they will function in the event of an emergency.
- In 2025, we repaired and/or replaced over 200 water services.
- In 2025, we responded to 16 water main breaks, of which, eight were in the winter months.



Field Repair of a Valve



Large Meter Testing



La Crosse Water Utility

- Meter Shop -

- The La Crosse Water Utility is responsible for testing, cleaning, and repairing each of the 15,500 water meters in the city and 50 large meters from the Village of Holmen.
- We follow the Public Service Commission's (PSC) requirements of exchanging/replacing meters on the following schedule:
 - 1" & smaller meters - Every 20 years
 - 1.5" - 2" meters - Every 4 years
 - 3" - 4" meters - Every 2 years
 - 6" meters - Yearly
- The La Crosse Water Utility ensures the accuracy of all 15,500 water meters in commercial and residential properties by testing them after they've been exchanged/replaced.
 - Small meters must test in the accuracy range of 98.5% to 101.5%
 - Large meter's accuracy range must test between 97% to 103.5%
 - If any meter tests lower or higher than the range indicated, it is scrapped, as required by the PSC
- In 2025
 - We tested 495 large meters and 1,172 small meters.
 - We replaced or scrapped 1,248 meters, all of which are recorded and documented by year
 - We responded to 3,140 service calls that ranged from meter readings, meter exchanges, checks regarding high water consumption or leaks, locating curb stops, etc.

Seasonal Meter Storage



Upcoming Events

- The new large utility garage will be completed
- Plans to rehabilitate Myrick Pumphouse will begin
- Plans for drilling Well 27 will begin
- Security fencing will start to be installed around each well house
- The Water Meter Station construction will begin
- The Grandad Reservoir will be rehabilitated for the first time since it's 1913 installation
- Two miles of 24-inch watermain will be installed on Highway 16
- The frequency of fire hydrant flushing will increase



Grandad Reservoir under Construction in 1913



La Crosse Water Utility

Thank you, La Crosse, for all the trust and support in our 149 years of supplying clean and safe drinking water!

Wastewater Utility Updates

January 2026 1st Quarter

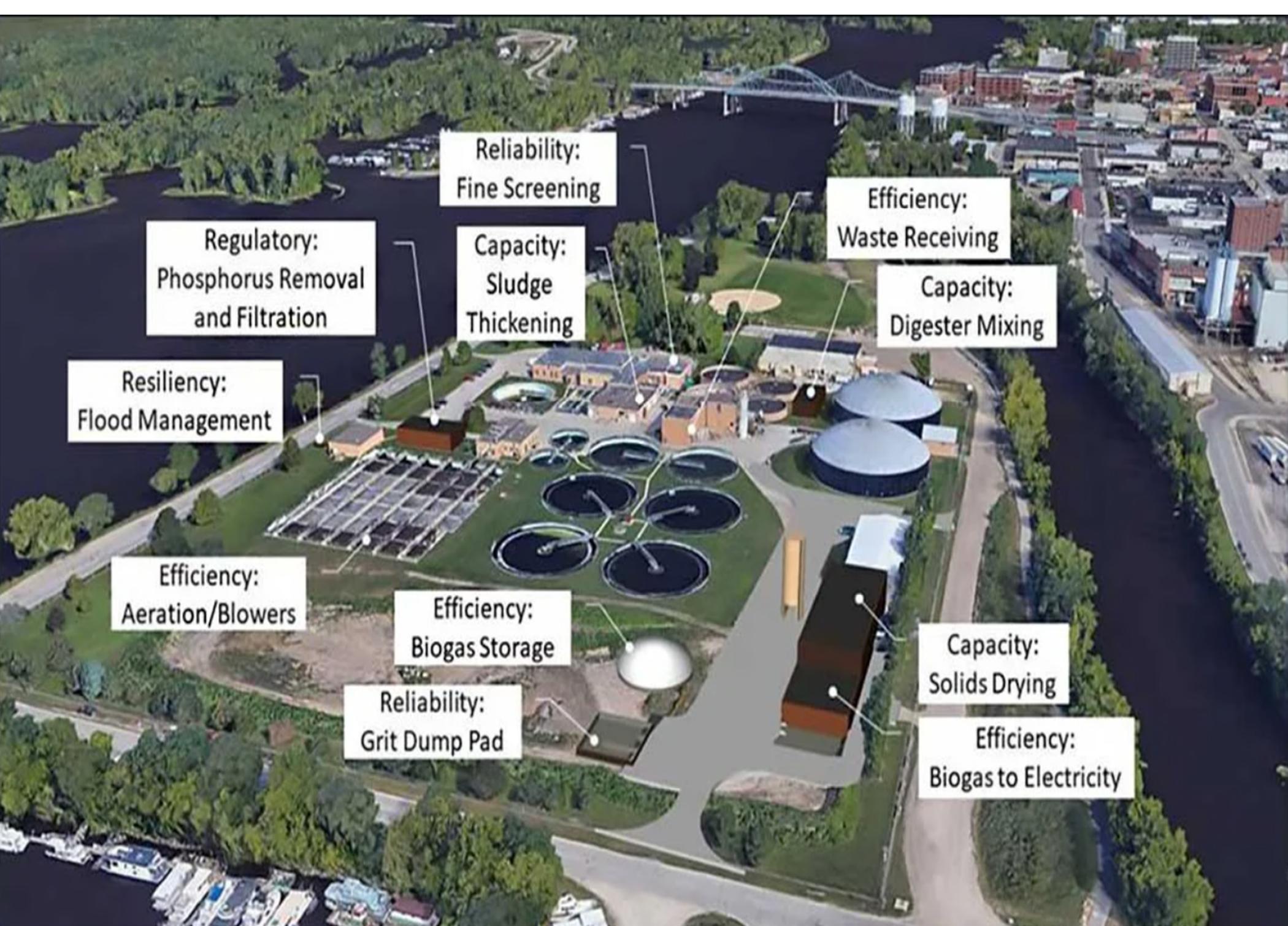
The La Crosse Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) receives and treats 10 million gallons per day of sewage from the City of La Crosse, contracted communities, trucked waste haulers, and 12 large industries.

The design capacity for sewage is 20 million gallons per day. The design capacity for biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) loading is 30,000 of BOD/day.



The Wastewater Treatment Plant is located on the bank of the Mississippi River. At one point, moving the facility to higher ground was considered, but the cost to move was estimated at 440 million dollars. Instead, stop logs with bypass pumping capacity were installed to prevent flooding at the 100 year flood stage.





4.5-year Project to Upgrade the La Crosse Wastewater Treatment Plant 62

Upgrades to the Wastewater Treatment Plant Include:

- A unique numbering sequence for each building to help identify the building's location
- Identify treatment process location
 - This helps with tracking the cost to operate each process for budgeting purposes.
 - The building ID will help with enhanced asset management as it relates to types of treatments.
- A QR Code System was installed on all new equipment
 - QR Codes will be linked to a handheld scanning device which will lead staff to operation and maintenance manuals and records and standard operating procedures.
 - The QR Code System is also tied to our asset management for future use.



Backup emergency power, creating redundancy when we lose Utility power⁶⁴.

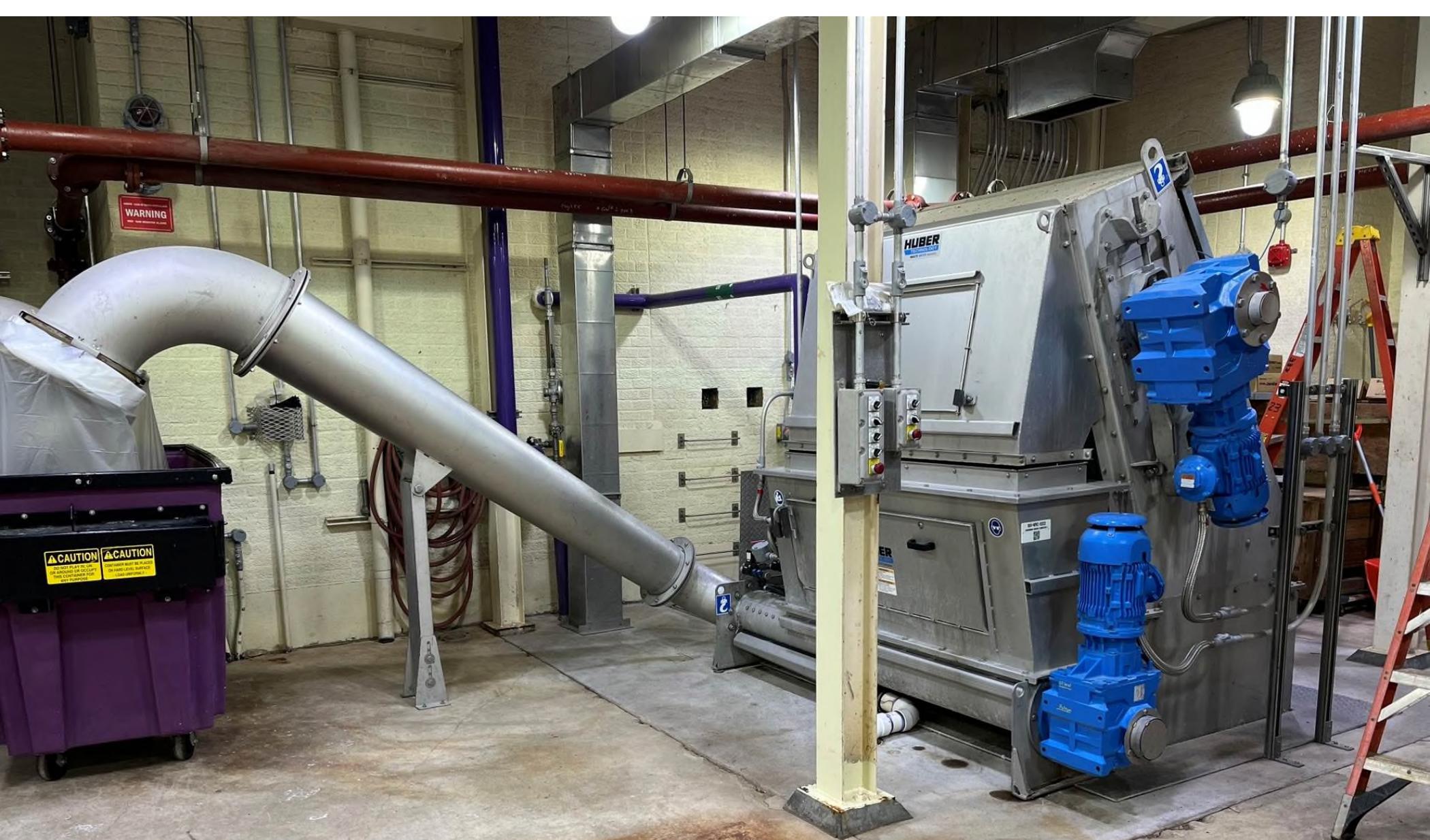
New power distribution throughout the WWTP



This creates a more reliable power supply to each building ensuring that all processes do not go out when transformers are lost.



Redundancy built into Head Works. Second influent fine screen added for backup.



**Second influent fine screen
and additional compactor.**



Extended aeration to enhance the biological nutrient removal of Phosphorus and Nitrogen



Installation of effluent disc filters to remove solids/TSS to meet low level phosphorus limits of 0.01mg/L

Reuse of effluent water (W-3)



Conserves water by using processed Wastewater instead of new water from the Water Utility

Solids Processing Enhanced



Solids thicken to reduce the volume of sludge by removing water. This increases the capacity of the digesters to increase solids loading and methane gas production. This French Technology is one of the first installed in the USA.



**Additional sludge
screening before
digesters and Biosolids
Heat Dryer**

High Strength Waste Receiving Station Repurposed Centrifuge Garage



High Strength Waste is made up restaurant grease trap waste and dairy waste of the service area. A specific amount of high strength waste is needed to produce a volume of methane gas production.

Anerobic digestion is where sludge is heated to 95 degrees and the reduction of solids occurs.



This process has been enhanced by better mixing, adding heating loops, and having thicker sludge by removing water. This increases solids capacity and methane gas production.



Mix pumps and heat pumps dedicated to each of the four anaerobic digesters ⁷⁵



Dedicated heat exchangers for each anaerobic digester ⁷⁶



Methane gas is burned in boilers to create hot water which, in turn, heats the anaerobic digesters to 95 degrees, heats the WWTP campus in the cooler months, and is used in a loop to heat up a dryer for biosolids reuse.

Hot Water Loops



**One low temp. loop for heating the digesters and WWTP campus.
One medium temp. loop dedicated to dry biosolids.**



Pumps for the two hot water loops

When methane gas is produced from anaerobic digestion, methane gas is stored in the biogas storage bubble.



Dedicated Methane Gas Conditioning Skid

Methane gas is a dirty gas. This conditioning and filter skid helps control the quality of the methane gas before burning it as a fuel.

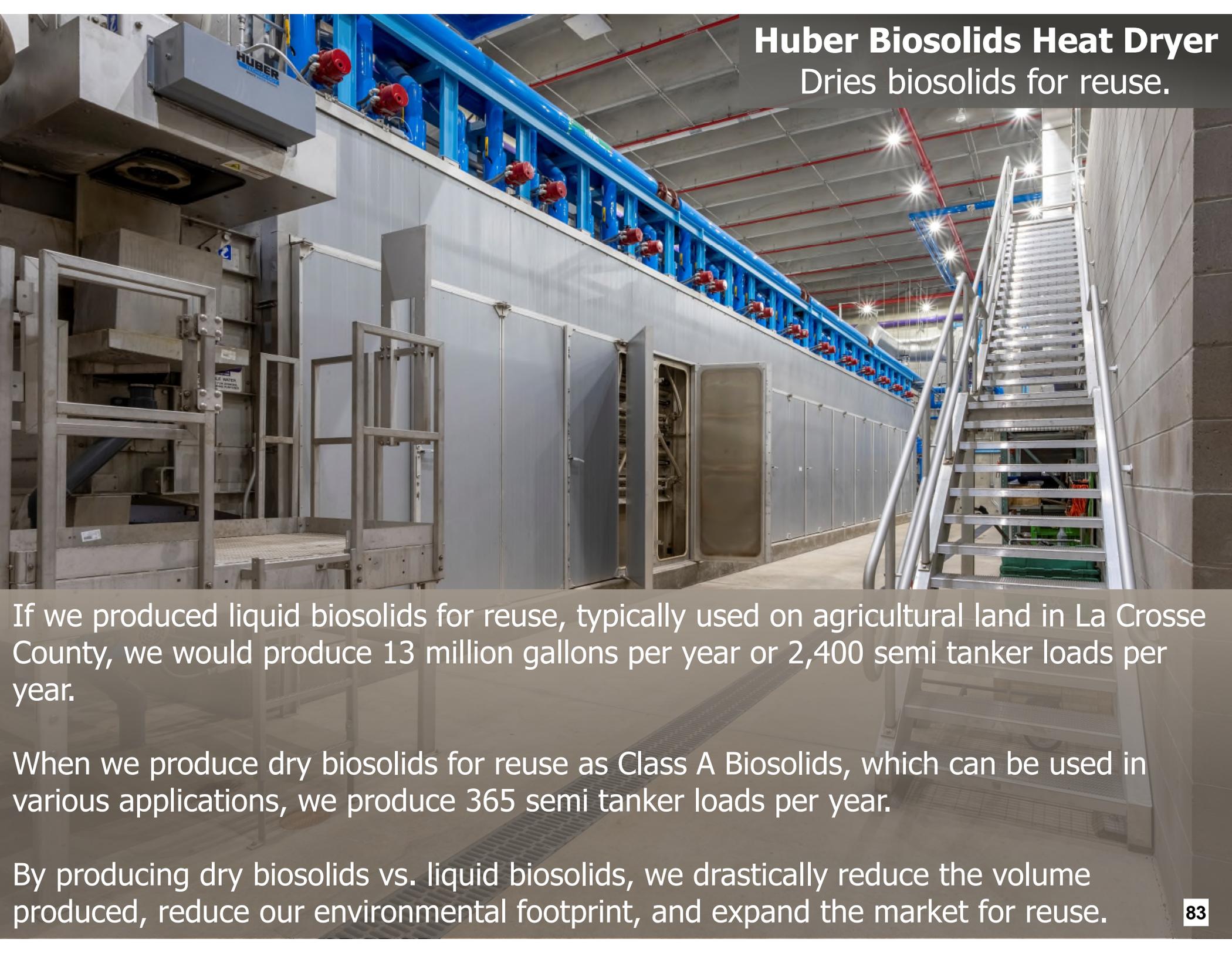
Annual maintenance of the gas conditioning media is completed to remove Hydrogen Sulfide (H₂S) and Siloxane. (Methane Dirty Gas)

Co-Generation System

It produces electricity and heat from running the engine. The heat from the exhaust and water jacket are captured for the two hot water loops. This engine is fueled by methane gas produced at the WWTP.

When in operation, the Co-Gen System has the ability to produce 100% of the WWTP electricity demand and creates enough hot water to heat the digesters and dry biosolids without purchasing natural gas or electricity.

The WWTP currently spends around \$500,000 on electricity each year. The cost to maintain this engine is about \$220,000 per year. This unit will be 100% online in March of 2026 as we work with Xcel Energy to commission saving the WWTP roughly \$280,000 per year.



Huber Biosolids Heat Dryer

Dries biosolids for reuse.

If we produced liquid biosolids for reuse, typically used on agricultural land in La Crosse County, we would produce 13 million gallons per year or 2,400 semi tanker loads per year.

When we produce dry biosolids for reuse as Class A Biosolids, which can be used in various applications, we produce 365 semi tanker loads per year.

By producing dry biosolids vs. liquid biosolids, we drastically reduce the volume produced, reduce our environmental footprint, and expand the market for reuse.



Silo for storage of heat dried biosolids. As a truck pulls in, it fills and then exits the facility.

Heat dried biosolids can be reused Class A biosolid fertilizer. In the future, there is a possibility it could be burned as biomass energy to produce electricity. **85**

Goals

- Continue to track the actual cost to operate the upgraded WWTP
 - Meeting Low level Phosphorus limits, Operation and 24/7 operation of Co Gen to produce electricity and heat.
- Continue to maintain and operate this large WWTP ensuring its success
- Continue to understand and navigate new and stricter limits coming from the State DNR
 - PFOS
- Continue to work on best practice to fund CIP Projects as construction costs increase at alarming rates
- Continue condition assessment of sanitary sewer collection for future rehabilitation projects

Projects

- Current: GIS reimplementation and Building out the mapping attributes.
- 2026: WWTP Office Space and Admin. Remodel
- 2026: Hagar and Pammel Creek sanitary lift station upgrades
 - Pumps and controls
 - The Hagar Lift Station pumps all the sewage from the North Side of La Crosse, City of Onalaska, Industrial Park/Kwik Trip production, and the Town of Campbell.
- 2027: UV Disinfection upgrade at the WWTP
 - To start after disinfection season 2027 and be completed before May 1, 2028 disinfection season.
- 2028: Finish Sewer Interceptor rehabilitation from Division Street to Isle La Plume/WWTP