



# Pipeline Express

Providing reliable, quality water and services at a reasonable cost.

## It's Finally Here! New Payment Portal Goes Live

By Martha Burckhardt

After years of planning, negotiating, and testing, SPRWS is proud to announce the launch of our brand-new Payment Portal! If you haven't heard much about it, that's because the transition was smooth— thanks to the dedication and hard work of our teams.

Elena Iliarski led the initiative alongside Nick Sprenke from IS, with key contributions from Derek Olson and Jen Guertin in Customer Service, Nadya Olseth from Cashiers, and Joshua Cobb, Jodi Wallin, and Adam Worm, who spearheaded the marketing campaign. Additionally, Jordyn Amundsen and Gary Slowiak played a crucial role in pre-go-live testing, while Jodi Wallin, Adam Worm, Tom Zangs, Graham Chaple, Tom Buth, and Nick Sprenke participated in the soft launch by making payments on their accounts.

Our customers can now enjoy modern, secure, and convenient payment options at their fingertips.

### The SPRWS Billing Ecosystem

SPRWS is responsible for billing approximately 97,000 accounts each year, which includes:

- 90,000 accounts billed on a quarterly basis,
- 4,400 accounts billed monthly,

- 2,500 accounts billed annually, and
- 100 accounts billed on an as-needed basis.

In total, we generate around 420,000 bills annually. With such a vast billing system, implementing a modernized payment solution was essential to improving efficiency and customer satisfaction.

### New System Features

The new payment system introduces several exciting enhancements, including:

- **Enhanced Customer Engagement** – Improved communication and account management options.
- **Modern Payment System** – A user-friendly platform that simplifies bill payment.
- **Comprehensive Payment Support** – Accepting multiple payment types, including debit/credit cards, electronic checks (ACH), and digital wallets such as PayPal, Venmo, and Apple Pay.
- **Multiple Payment Channels** – Customers can make payments via web, text message, off-site kiosks, “tap and pay” options, and more.
- **Device-Agnostic Solution** – Payments

**NEW PAYMENT PORTAL**

**PAYMENT TYPES**

VISA, MasterCard, DISCOVER, AMERICAN EXPRESS, check, Digital Wallets: Apple Pay, PayPal, Venmo, Google Pay

**PAYMENT CHANNELS**

Responsive Web: Phone, Tablet, Desktop, Agent Assisted, Textmail, Point of Sale, In Store: Walmart, CVS, Walgreens

**PAYMENT METHODS**

- One-Time Payment
- Recurring Payment
- Payment Plan
- Future-Dated Payment
- Multiple Accounts Payment

can be made from any device for maximum convenience.

- **Stored Payment Methods & AutoPay Enrollment** – Customers can securely store payment methods, schedule future payments, and enroll in autopayment programs.
- **Superior Protection & Fraud Management** – Ensuring customer transactions remain secure.
- **Fully Hosted Environment** – Reliable, cloud-based infrastructure for uninterrupted service.
- **Advanced Analytics** – Providing insightful data to enhance user experience and optimize billing operations.

This upgrade marks a significant step forward in making bill payment easier, more secure, and more accessible for all our customers.

# Donation Made on SPRWS' Behalf: Money to go to the MN Water Research Fund

By Jodi Wallin



Bernie Bullert

The Minnesota Water Research Fund (MWRF) at the University of Minnesota recently received a generous donation in honor of Saint Paul Regional Water Services' employees, recognizing their excellence in the field of water. The donation came courtesy of former General Manager Bernie Bullert. SPRWS will be listed as an honorary silver partner in 2025 and as such, be invited to a research lab tour and upcoming webinars.

In addition, Bullert contributed further funding in memory of Verne Jacobson, Steve Gleason, and Jim Haugen—three esteemed SPRWS leaders who dedicated their careers to ensuring clean and reliable water for the community.

Bullert established the MWRF in 2015 with a bold vision: to support groundbreaking research in drinking water, surface water, stormwater, and more. His long-term ambition is to establish an endowed chair in water research at the University, strengthening Minnesota's role as a leader in water innovation. He is also deeply committed to mentoring the next generation of water scientists and engineers, ensuring that today's students become tomorrow's problem solvers.

So far, the MWRF has funded 11 research projects, all led by faculty

from the U of M's Department of Civil, Environmental, and Geo-Engineering in collaboration with both graduate and undergraduate students. To further elevate water research, the fund has also hosted seven virtual research events, showcasing new discoveries and advancements in the field.

If you've attended the Minnesota Section of the American Water Works Association conference in Duluth, you may have seen Bullert at his information table near the registration desk, always ready to discuss his mission and answer questions.

The Minnesota Water Research Center would be a hub for advancing sustainable water management and treatment. It would focus on:

- Solving emerging water quality challenges through cutting-edge research
- Training future water professionals, building the technical expertise needed for the industry
- Educating both professionals and the public about water issues that impact our communities

"People need both information and motivation to make meaningful changes—especially when the benefits aren't immediately visible," says Bullert. "It's challenging but essential to shift our thinking toward long-term stewardship of our water resources."

By supporting research and education, the MWRF is helping Minnesota stay at the forefront of water innovation and sustainability—an investment that benefits everyone who relies on clean, safe water.

## JOHNSON, RETIREE, PASSES AWAY

Bernie Johnson was a long-term employee of the water utility



Bernard, "Bernie" Johnson, retiree passed away last fall at age of 87.

He was a long time employee of the city of Saint Paul and of the water utility.

He began his career with public works in 1970 as a groundsman and also worked as a ditch digger before moving to the water department as a watershed laborer in 1972.

He took on the new title of water utility worker I in 1992 and retired from that position in 1995.

Our condolences go out to his family, friends and former co-workers.



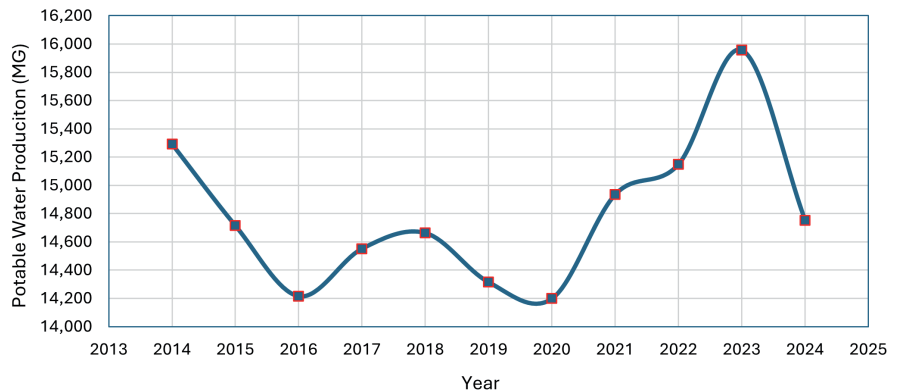
# Over the Decade: Potable Water Production

By Che Fei Chen

Over the past decade, water production at the McCarrons Water Treatment Plant has fluctuated due to population growth, climate conditions, economic factors, and conservation efforts. Water consumption stabilized in 2020 but increased from 2021 to 2023, driven by residential, industrial, and commercial demand. However, year-to-year usage varies due to weather patterns and conservation practices.

Saint Paul's precipitation has become more variable, with wetter spring and summer months and drier winters. Rainstorms have intensified across the Midwest, increasing the risk of flooding and affecting water availability and runoff into the SPRWS watershed. In 2024, water production declined to an average of 40.3 million gallons per day (MGD), influenced by precipitation levels 5.94 inches above normal for the year and 5.09 inches above normal from May to September. From 2014 to 2024, water production from May to October showed a moderate correlation with precipitation, with an R-squared value of 0.5792, indicating a noticeable relationship between water production and climate factors.

Annual Total Potable Water Production for Past Decade



Saint Paul's average temperature has risen over the past decade, consistent with Minnesota's overall warming of 1.5°F to 2°F over the past 50 years. Winters are milder with fewer extreme cold spells and shorter snow cover periods, while summers are hotter, with more frequent and prolonged heatwaves. The average summer temperature has risen by a few degrees, leading to higher water use during peak summer months, particularly in July, adding pressure on Mississippi River water resources when

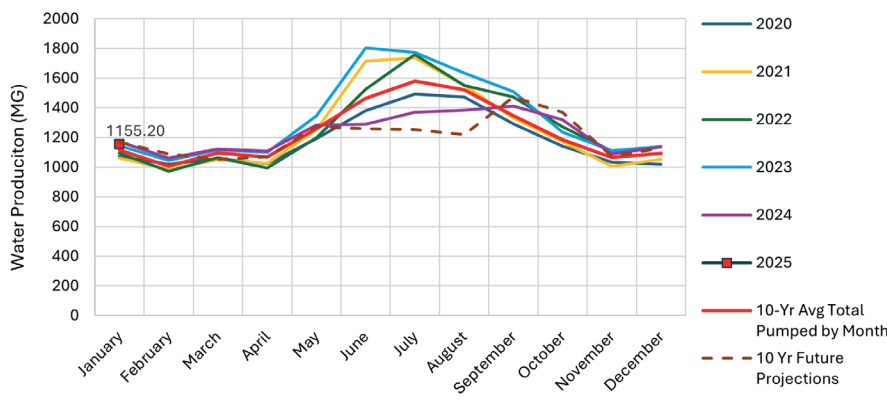
summer months tend to see higher water usage with lower precipitation due to increased outdoor activities like irrigation. Annual water production has ranged from 35 MGD to 51 MGD, with the highest usage during periods of hot, dry weather.

### Future Water Usage Projections

Water demand is expected to decline due to conservation measures such as low-water-use technologies in industries, businesses, and households, grant-funded toilet replacement programs, and smart water meters. Climate projections suggest increased precipitation during warmer months, which may further reduce outdoor irrigation needs. Seasonal fluctuations are expected to continue, especially in summer when demand peaks. Overall, water usage is projected to decrease by 1 to 2 MGD per decade.

Despite these trends, Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS) continues to manage seasonal fluctuations and long-term demand patterns by implementing resiliency initiatives and optimizing water supply management to ensure reliable service for Saint Paul and surrounding communities.

Potable Water Production (MG) by Month from 2020 to 2025



# Attend Respect in the Workplace

## Online classes set for March 4, other dates



It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to maintain a respectful work and public service environment. The City of Saint Paul will maintain a work and public service environment free from discrimination, violence, harassment, and offensive behavior. To assist with that goal, training is now available.

This training is required for all employees this year and I'd like our supervisors to take it by April 1, before construction season, said General Manager Racquel Vaske. Each person must register to have it tracked in the system. Register at <https://stpaulmn.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Training-Registration.aspx>

Supervisor training in the Respect in the Workplace and Workplace Conduct Policy is scheduled for 1 p.m. on Tuesday, March 4 online.

For all staff, there is a training in Respectful and Inclusive Workplace: Preventing Harassment, which is scheduled for noon on Thursday, March 20 online while the Respect in the Workplace and

Workplace Conduct Policy training is scheduled for Monday, May 5 at 1 p.m. online.

### Learning objectives:

- Understand pillars for promoting a respectful and inclusive workplace
- Understand the City's Workplace Conduct Policy and Procedures

The City of Saint Paul will not tolerate retaliation or intimidation directed toward anyone who makes a complaint or participates in an investigation under this policy. This policy applies to each and every employee and official of the City of Saint Paul, including the Mayor, City Council members, and members of boards and commissions. The City of Saint Paul will not tolerate such behavior by or toward any employee or officer. Any employee or officer of the City of Saint Paul who engages in such behavior is subject to consequences, up to and including termination.

## FREE ONSITE BIOMETRIC SCREENINGS

To be held March 20 and 27, the screenings will earn you 1,000 Healthy St. Paul points



Free biometric screenings at the water utility are scheduled for 7 a.m. - 11 a.m. on March 20 and 27 in the cafeteria. Sign up now to reserve your appointment time.

To sign up:

1. Log in to Personify Health (formerly Virgin Pulse)
2. Click on the "Benefits" tab
3. Select "LabCorp - Biometric Screenings"
4. Click "Start Now"
5. Click "Continue" on the onsite screening box
4. Select "Water" under the location drop down
5. Schedule your appointment

Biometric screenings offer employees the opportunity to earn 1,000 points toward their health reimbursement account via Healthy Saint Paul.

You only need 1,500 points to earn \$300. To earn the full \$900 possible in HRA money, you need 3,500 points.

For more information, go to [healthy.stpaul.gov](http://healthy.stpaul.gov).