

Pipeline Express

Provide high-quality water and exceptional services to the people and communities we support.

McCarrons Providing Quality Water New Water Treatment Plant Operating

By Will Menkhaus

On July 8, SPRWS and Jacobs reached a significant milestone: the new drinking water treatment plant began producing water. During the first week, the new facility supplied about 20% of the system's demand, with the remainder coming from the existing plant.

Since then, it's been a whirlwind of testing and collaboration. SPRWS operations staff and Jacobs engineers have been putting the facility through a wide range of operating scenarios. Each week, the new plant handled a greater share of production, ultimately reaching 100% of total system flow in mid-August. Since then, all of our water has been produced by the new plant.

Where we are now

Every piece of equipment has been used to produce drinking water and is functioning as intended. Under our



The new clarifiers are online and have been operating since July 8 in the new treatment plant.

contract, Jacobs must demonstrate that the new facility can consistently meet specific water quality standards—equal to or better than the old plant—for 30 continuous days without major equipment failures. This phase, known as Acceptance Testing, began Aug. 24 and has been proceeding smoothly.

Passing Acceptance Testing will mark a

major milestone. At that point, SPRWS will officially take ownership of the facility, equipment warranties will begin, and final payments will be released. The old plant will remain on standby in case of emergencies, but demolition is expected to begin soon after testing is completed.

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New Treatment Plant Operations Underway

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What's ahead

Passing Acceptance Testing doesn't mean the new facility will be flawless or that operations staff will instantly know every detail. Teams continue to identify and fix system bugs, refine chemical dosage programs, and develop Standard Operating Procedures to capture collective knowledge into step-by-step guides for routine and emergency tasks. Some water quality analyzers are still being finalized, with lab samples temporarily filling the gap.

Despite those challenges, early results are clear: the new facility is performing well and, in many areas, is already easier to operate. (Just ask Jeff Gehring about the new lime system.) With continued teamwork, the remaining kinks will be worked out.



An ozonation tank in the ozone room in the new plant.

Thank you

Reaching this stage has been a journey and there's more ahead. A huge thank-you goes to all employees who made this possible, with special recognition

to the treatment plant and pumping operators, water quality lab staff, along with Paul Rice, Paul Scott, and Che Fei Chen. Their long hours and dedication have been instrumental in bringing the new facility online.

Retiree Bob Addyman Passes Away at Age 91

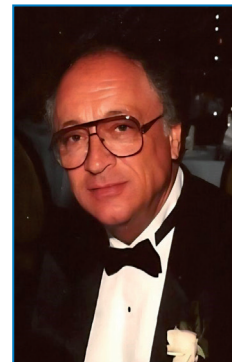
Robert, "Bob," Addyman passed away on July 31, 2025, at the age of 91.

Bob was a retiree from 1989 who worked for the water utility and the city of Saint Paul starting in 1953.

He worked as a ditch digger, a water serviceman, and a water service foreman, which is the position from which he retired.

A celebration of life will be held from 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 18 in the Willow Room of the Marsh Golf Course at 526 Inwood Ave. North in Oakdale, MN 55728.

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



Bob Addyman



Standing Tall: The Role of Water Towers in Our System

By Rich Hibbard

If you've driven through Saint Paul or its surrounding communities, chances are you've spotted one of our water towers rising above the treetops. These towers—often painted blue and topped with a rounded tank—are more than landmarks. They are a vital part of our water distribution system, helping to maintain pressure, balance demand, and ensure reliable service to our customers.

Why We Have Water Towers

Water towers serve three main functions: they maintain water pressure, store water to meet peak demand, and provide a reserve for emergencies such as firefighting or pump station outages. By elevating water in a tank, we use gravity to pressurize the water mains below. This allows consistent delivery of water to homes and businesses even when pumps are off.

In fact, water pressure is largely a function of elevation: every 2.31 feet of water height equals about 1 psi of pressure. By strategically locating and sizing our towers, we ensure that even in areas with challenging topography, our customers receive adequate and safe water pressure.

How Many We Have and Where

We currently operate twelve elevated water towers across our system, including notable examples like the Highland Park twins, (Highland Tank

#2 and #3), the St. Anthony Tank, and the towering Marie Avenue tank. These towers are spread across various pressure zones, which correspond to different elevation levels in our service area. Some pressure zones also include standpipes or underground reservoirs, but towers remain key in many areas for maintaining consistent system pressure.

What Makes Them Different

Not all water towers are created equal. The differences often come down to structure and capacity. Our spheroid tanks, like the St. Anthony Tank, feature a rounded tank on a central pedestal. Others, like the multi-leg spheroids at Highland, use several vertical supports. Still others, such as the Marie Avenue and Cope Avenue Tanks, are fluted column tanks—a design that integrates the support column into a single enclosed structure.

Then there's the standpipes, like the one at McKnight Road. Though technically a water tower, a standpipe looks more like a vertical cylinder and stores water from the ground up. While more economical to build, standpipes can be less effective at water turnover and may present water quality challenges if not carefully managed.

Interesting Facts

Many of our water towers were built in the 1950s and 60s but continue to serve reliably with regular maintenance



Cope Avenue tank in Maplewood.

and occasional full recoating projects, like the work recently completed at Highland #3.

All potable water storage tanks are equipped with overflows in case of instrumentation failure, ensuring excess water is safely discharged.

Because of the elevation differences in our region, water from some towers has to be pumped multiple times before reaching its final destination.

Our water towers are an essential part of what keeps the system running smoothly—and looking up at one now, you'll know it's not just a pretty landmark, but a carefully engineered part of your daily water service.

KATHY TRAVIS TO RETIRE AFTER 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

Kathy Travis has spent her last day in the office as of September 2.

Kathy started with the city as a park aide in 1985. She became a grounds keeper for the water department in 1988 and a ditch digger in 1989, the title of which changed to water laborer that year.

Kathy earned a promotion to water utility worker in 1992, the same year that she became the city's first female heavy equipment operator.

In 1993 she added the title of stores laborer to her resume and in 2007 she became a watershed supervisor I.

The name changed in 2009 to supply systems supervisor I and in 2013 she was promoted to water distribution supervisor I. In 2022, she earned a promotion to water distribution supervisor II, the position from which she



Kathy Travis in 1993.



Graeme Chaple, distribution division manager, congratulates Kathy Travis on 40 years of service and her pending retirement from the water utility at a gathering in her honor on Sept. 2 in the administration cafeteria.

retires on September 19.

Congratulations to Kathy on her retirement!

Staff Represent SPRWS at Statewide Water Conference Sept. 16-19

By Jodi Wallin

Every year, water professionals from across the state gather in Duluth for the annual American Water Works Association Minnesota Section conference. It's a chance to network, share ideas, and learn from one another. This year's conference runs September 16–19 and will feature SPRWS staff members presenting as subject matter experts, along with our women's pipe tapping team competing for a spot at the 2026 AWWA Conference and Expo.

The conference kicks off on Monday, Sept. 16, with a bags tournament. If you'd like to represent SPRWS in the competition, your team must register online at mnawwa.org by the end of the day on Sept. 14.

On Tuesday, Sept. 17, be sure to cheer on our women's pipe tapping team of Maddy

Tusler, Alexandria Robertson, Caitlin Brunette, Rylee Wheelock, and Jordan Skender as they compete in the exhibit hall starting at 10:15 a.m. The team will test their skills and speed in manually tapping into a pressurized water main.

On Wednesday, Sept. 18, SPRWS will be well-represented during the technical sessions:

- At 1:45 p.m. in Room 205, Todd Freking and Will Menkhaus will present **SCADA: From 0 to 60 in One Hour**, an entry-level exploration of what the SCADA network entails and how it functions.
- At the same time in Room 202, Paul Rice will join Erinn Kunik from Jacobs to present **Startup of the SPRWS McCarrons Water Treatment Plant**

Improvement Project. Their session will provide an update on the startup process, the work required to get there, and lessons learned along the way.

On the final day, Thursday, Sept. 19, Racquel Vaske will take the stage in the main ballroom at 8:15 a.m. She'll join Annika Bankston (Minneapolis) and Karla Peterson (Minnesota Department of Health) for a discussion on **Water Rates and Affordability**. Having SPRWS staff selected as speakers and competitors at this conference is a testament to the strong reputation our utility holds within the water industry. Even if you won't be attending, please take a moment to congratulate these colleagues for representing SPRWS on a statewide stage.