



Pipeline Express

To provide high-quality water and exceptional services to the people and communities we support

May 1, 2026

McCarrons Treatment Plant Update Current Status and Next Steps



Clarifiers 2 - 5 along with floc 3 and the recarb basins being demoed in late March.

by Eric Noe

After a rigorous process of commissioning and start-up last summer, SPRWS officially accepted the new treatment plant this past October. Production staff since then have been working hard learning the intricacies of the new systems and ensuring that quality water goes out the door to our customers. If you see a production staff member, please remember to thank them for their dedication and tenacity- an entire division learning how to operate and maintain a new treatment plant is a once-in-a-generation feat. Though the new plant is up and running, there are several key aspects of the project to be completed by mid-May, 2027. Our campus will continue to be dramatically transformed. Major components of the project to be completed are described below.

Construction of New Water Quality Laboratory and Operator Space

The old flocculation 2 basin space is being retrofitted for a new water quality laboratory and

treatment operator control center. These new spaces will reside directly on top of the decommissioned basin and the operational 'Figure 8'- a series of channels that connect process water from the new ozone facility to the existing filters.

At the time of this article, the floor slab has been poured, and contractors are busy constructing ancillary systems including HVAC, fire protection, and a new roof. In late summer-early fall, the laboratory will start to come together as cabinetry, countertops, flooring, and laboratory equipment are installed. In mid-December, the laboratory and operator control center will be certified for occupancy.

Stormwater Pond Installation and Final Site Work

As many of you have seen, our campus looks drastically different as obsolete infrastructure

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McCarrons Treatment Plant Update

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(clarifiers #2-5, flocculation 3 and recarb basins) have been demolished. This spring and through mid-summer, contractors will backfill demolition areas with soil and install a series of stormwater infiltration basins. In total, there will be five stormwater infiltration basins: two east of our existing filter building, one basin east of the new ozone facility, one basin north of the new lime facility, and one basin directly south of our gravity thickening sludge facility.

Final site grading and paving will begin in early fall. A new paved road will wrap around the solid contact clarifiers, ozone facility, and then connect to the existing road south of the filter building. In addition, there will be a small parking lot for staff directly to the east of the new laboratory.

Landscaping will also begin around this time and will continue through the spring of 2027.

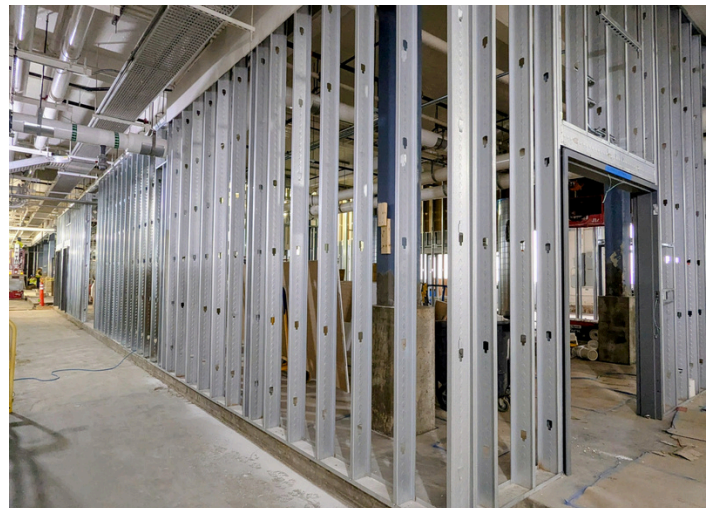
Old Lime Facility Interior Demolition

With the construction of the new lime facility north of the solid contact clarifiers, the old lime building became obsolete. Instead of a total demolition of the building, SPRWS leadership instead opted to largely gut the building to create a space for future needs of the utility.

Thank you again to all of the production division for your patience over the past couple of years of intense construction for the McCarrons Treatment Plant Update project. This is one of the largest water infrastructure projects in the history of Minnesota, and you all should be proud of your commitment to producing quality water for our customers.



Floc 2 after the floor was created using concrete.



Lab walls going up in floc 2 in late April.

Leader testifies at the state legislature



General Manager Racquel Vaske has testified at the Capitol multiple times in recent weeks to highlight the need for a \$250 million state bonding investment to support lead service line removal across Minnesota.

State bonding bills are a primary mechanism for funding large-scale public infrastructure, allowing the state to issue general obligation bonds for long-term capital improvements. This funding is critical to maintaining momentum for the Lead Free SPRWS program.

Vaske also testified in support of a separate bill requesting \$3.5 million in state funding to help cover necessary improvements at the Fridley Pump Station.

Will Menkhous and Racquel Vaske in front of the state capitol last week.

Drinking Water Week at SPRWS:

Recognizing the Work Behind the Water

During the first full week of May, water utilities across the country observe Drinking Water Week. From May 3–9, SPRWS will join that effort by highlighting the role drinking water plays in public health and the work required to deliver it every day.

Reliable drinking water doesn't happen by accident. Behind every tap is a system of treatment processes, distribution infrastructure, and operational coordination that runs continuously. Source water must be treated, monitored, and tested at multiple points, while pumps, storage facilities, and distribution networks are maintained to ensure consistent pressure and supply. Drinking Water Week is a useful reminder of the scale and complexity of that work, and the role it plays in supporting the communities we serve.

SPRWS provides drinking water to Saint Paul and 13 surrounding communities, serving more than 450,000 residents. On an average day, the system delivers about 45 million gallons of water through roughly 1,200 miles of water main, 10,000 hydrants, and about 95,000 service lines. That system requires ongoing inspection, repair, and coordination across multiple teams to operate reliably in all conditions, including peak demand periods and emergency situations.

Over the past year, a major focus has been the transition to the new water treatment plant. This \$250 million investment represents a significant upgrade to our treatment capabilities and positions the system to meet future regulatory, operational, and water quality needs. The facility incorporates updated treatment processes and improved system redundancy, helping ensure consistent performance and long-term resilience.

Work also continues on long-term initiatives like Lead Free SPRWS. The program is on track to replace its 5,000th lead service line by June, with the goal of removing all remaining lead service lines over the next decade at no cost to property owners. This work requires coordination across distribution, engineering, field crews, contractors, and customer outreach to complete replacements efficiently and minimize disruption.



A worker connects a copper service line from private property to the copper service line in right of way.



The new clarifiers at the new treatment plant.

While these projects are highly visible, they are part of a broader, ongoing effort to maintain and improve the system. Drinking Water Week is a chance to acknowledge that work across all functions, including treatment, distribution, engineering, laboratory services, customer service, and administrative support, that keeps the system operating and the water accessible 24/7 to all of our customers.

Volunteers Needed for Safety Picnic



This year's safety picnic will take place from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13 in front of the employee entrance to the administration building.

In addition to a lunch with hot dogs and hamburgers, staff will be able to visit with Melissa Anderson from city benefits.

Walman Optical will also be on site taking orders for prescription glasses. A prescription current within the last two years is needed.

Volunteers are needed to help make the event a success. People are needed to help set up from 9 a.m. and clean up afterwards until about 1:30 p.m. As the event gets underway, food line management staff are needed to distribute food to the employees onsite while runners are needed to help distribute food to the crews out in the field.

If there is a time between 9 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. that you could volunteer for a couple of hours on May 13, please contact Justina Ross at Justina.Ross@ci.stpaul.mn.us or Faith Xiongblaxang at faith.xiongblaxang@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Retirees Hernandez, Hjelle pass away

John Hernandez, retiree, 95, passed away on April 14. He was the father of Sandy Hernandez Cullen, storeroom supervisor.

John worked for the water department for 32 years. He started work as a ditch digger in 1953 and added the title miner in 1965. He worked both titles until he became a water laborer in 1974. He held that position until he retired in 1985.

Our condolences go out to Sandy and her family, along with John's friends and former co-workers.

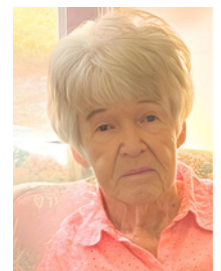
Mary Joanne Hjelle, retiree, 90, passed away on April 6. She worked for the city for 36 years.

She started as a junior billing machine operator in 1953 and was promoted to a billing machine operator in 1956. In 1964, she became an accounting machine operator II, and in 1986 became a water billing operator. She retired from the utility in 1989.

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



John Hernandez



Mary Joanne Hjelle