

Pipeline Express

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

McCarrons Water Treatment Plant: A New Era Begins

On September 25, the utility officially brought the new McCarrons Water Treatment Plant online under its own jurisdiction, marking the largest capital improvement project in the utility's history. After more than four years of planning and three years of construction, the \$250 million facility is now providing safe, reliable drinking water to our 450,000 customers across Saint Paul and 14 surrounding communities.

The moment was celebrated with a glass-raising led by General Manager Racquel Vaske, Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter, Maplewood Mayor Marylee Abrams, members of the Board of Water Commissioners, and representatives of the engineering firm Jacobs. While the public event drew attention from local media, the milestone reflects the dedication and hard work of many SPRWS staff, contractors, and partners who kept this complex project moving on schedule and under budget.



General Manager Racquel Vaske, Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter, Maplewood Mayor Marylee Abrams, Board of Water Commissioners President Mara Humphrey and Commissioner Chris Tolbert, along with Jacobs staff Gary Wilson, Leslie Sjobom, and Greg Fischer, and project manager Will Menkhaus join in a toast to the new treatment plant on Sept. 25.

Building for the Future

The previous McCarrons plant had been in service since 1920. While it delivered excellent water for more than a century, key components were approaching the end of their useful life. Some systems had no built-in redundancies, meaning if a piece of equipment went offline, there

was no backup. The modernization was a proactive choice to prevent failure and to prepare for the future growth of our region.

The new plant was constructed on the same site as the original, allowing the old facility to remain operational throughout the project. This careful

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New Plant Celebrated at Ceremony Sept. 25

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sequencing ensured uninterrupted service even as massive new clarifiers, ozone generators, and recarbonation basins took shape next door. Four new clarifiers, each capable of treating 28 million gallons per day, anchor the process. With all systems online, the new plant can treat up to 112 million gallons daily, providing more capacity than the grid currently requires.

New Technology, Greater Resilience

For the first time in SPRWS history, ozone is being used in the treatment process. Ozonation helps with taste and odor control, provides an additional layer of disinfection, and positions us to address contaminants that may emerge in the future.

The plant also incorporates new lime-softening clarifiers, recarbonation basins, and digital monitoring systems. Together, these upgrades create a safer, more flexible operation with built-in backups that give staff time and breathing room to address issues without risking service disruptions.

What's Next

While the new facility is now producing water, work continues on the site. Crews will be demolishing old structures and building a new state-of-the-art water quality laboratory and office space, with completion expected by the end of 2026. Once construction is



Board of Water Commissioners President Mara Humphrey and Commissioner Chris Tolbert, left, and Gary Wilson and Leslie Sjobom from Jacobs, center, are joined by SPRWS staff at a celebration of the turning on of the water treatment plant and its passing of the acceptance testing on Sept. 25.

finished, SPRWS plans to reopen the plant for public and school tours.

A Shared Accomplishment

The McCarrons rebuild is more than just a new building, it is an investment in public health, community trust, and the future of our utility. SPRWS employees, whether working at the plant or in the lab, played a role in keeping operations steady while this massive transformation unfolded.

The next time you turn on the tap, take a moment to reflect: the water flowing out represents not only our treatment expertise, but also years of planning, teamwork, and commitment to serving our community.



General Manager Racquel Vaske addresses the crowd at a celebration of the new water treatment plant on Sept. 25.

Assistant General Managers Appointed

By Jodi Wallin

Will Menkhaus and Rich Rowland have been appointed into assistant general manager roles at SPRWS. Both Will and Rich have made significant contributions during their time with SPRWS. They bring deep experience, strong leadership, and a commitment to supporting teams and colleagues. "I am confident they will bring energy, structure, and vision to their new roles, helping us meet the challenges and opportunities ahead," said General Manager Racquel Vaske.

In the coming weeks, they will work with division managers to evaluate needs and determine how best to utilize the vacancies created by their promotions.

Will started with the water utility in 2017 working as an engineer managing projects such as the Highland Park reservoir redevelopment and water main replacement projects. He worked on wholesale rate studies and contract procurement and management. In 2019, he was tapped to lead the McCarrons water treatment plant improvement project, which is the largest drinking water project in state history. In 2023 he maintained his role as the project manager for the treatment

plant project while adding duties as assistant division manager for the production division. In his new role, he will provide leadership support for the production and engineering divisions.

Will started his engineering career working on the Panama Canal expansion in Panama City, Panama. He met his wife in Uganda, and they have 5-year-old, 3-year-old, and 6-month-old daughters. His original career plans were to become an NFL quarterback or professional baseball pitcher but has determined that the travel schedule at the water utility is much better.

Rich started with the water utility in 2013 as a water utility technician assigned to the distribution division. During his career, he has worked in business, distribution and engineering working on a multitude of projects. In 2018, he was appointed to the assistant distribution division manager and



Will Menkhaus



Rich Rowland

in 2023 he was appointed the business division manager.

"When I look back, the things I am most proud of is the privilege of working with so many different people," said Rich.

"I have tried my best to listen, learn, and grow as an employee and as a person as well as find solutions to make the organization stronger and that benefit my colleagues and our customers."

Rich continued, "I would like to thank all my past and current colleagues who have given me an opportunity and I look forward to working with all of you for many years to come."

Vacation Carryover: Get approval for over 120 hours

If you will need to carry over more than 120 hours of vacation time into the new year, you need to request vacation carryover permission for up to 40 hours, or to cash out 40 hours.

Work with your supervisor to deter-

mine vacation balances. Apply for vacation carryover or cash out by Oct. 15 at <https://forms.office.com/g/JMTdjs4sYS>. Your request should include why the vacation was not able to be used during 2025, and if carrying over, when you

plan to use the vacation by the end of the first quarter of next year.

You should try to keep your balance under 120 hours by the end of year if possible, so take that vacation!

TOM BUTH RETIRES AFTER 35 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE CITY

By Jodi Wallin

Tom Buth has retired after 35 years of service.

Starting in public works, Tom joined SPRWS as a water system worker I in 1993. He became a water system worker II in 1996 and took on a new role as an electronic data processor programmer trainee in 1997.

In 1998, he became an IS information tech analyst II. In 2001, he earned a promotion to IS system consultant I, working up to IS consultant III by 2009. In 2019 and 2020, he worked out of title as the IS manager, choosing to revert back to his IS consultant III position following that work, the position from which he retires.

Congratulations to Tom on his retirement.



Tom Buth and Andy Knuth work out of the Vadnais garage during an evacuation drill in 2006.



Tom Buth receives a years of service award from Steve Schneider in 2010.



Tom Buth and Mike Anderson look over a laptop at the employee conference in 2013.



Marge Abbas and Tom Buth in 2010.

Take in the Fall Colors from the Highland Park Water Tower Oct. 11-12

By Jodi Wallin

If you've never been to the top of the Highland Park Water Tower, now is your chance! Saint Paul Regional Water Services is hosting its fall open house on Saturday, October 11, and Sunday, October 12, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Climb the 151 steps to the tower's observation deck and take in stunning views of both the Saint Paul and Minneapolis skylines. The fall season makes the experience even more spectacular, with brilliant colors from the trees surrounding the city.

Several of your coworkers from the community engagement team will be on hand to answer questions about the utility and to serve up cool, great-tasting Saint Paul water from the Quench Buggy. And if you stop by on Saturday, October 11, you might even catch a glimpse of Willy Water, SPRWS's very own mascot!

The Highland Park Water Tower is a neighborhood landmark designed by city architect Clarence Wigington and completed in 1928. Its Kasota and Bedford stone facings make it as beautiful as it is functional.



Whether you're looking for a family outing, a chance to learn more about our utility, or simply a photo-worthy fall view, the Highland Park Water Tower open house is a perfect opportunity.