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City to celebrate treatment plant's expansion

Jennifer Gentile/Staff Writer

While a wastewater treatment plant may seem like an unconventional place for a celebration, the city of Vacaville is inviting the public to visit one of its hard-working facilities July 26 for an open house and tours. The event will showcase the renovation and expansion that has been completed at the Easterly Wastewater Treatment Plant, at 6040 Vaca Station Road.

City Manager David Van Kirk said the improvements have cost around \$100 million and have been at least six years in the making.



A worker at the Easterly Wastewater Treatment Plant looks over some of the tanks used at the treatment facility.

Assistant Public Works Director Dave Tompkins said planning began in 1996 while construction started around 2001, with Walsh Pacific Construction chosen as the main contractor.

The two sources of funding for the big-ticket project were development impact fees and fees from residential and commercial users.

A time-consuming part of the process, he said, was having a consultant complete an odor study, which led to the addition of odor-control facilities as part of the renovation work. Another well, which provides water lubrication in the plant's pumps, was added as well.

"By having two wells, it improves the reliability out here," Tompkins said.

The work also featured new belt presses, drying beds, flow meters and disinfection facilities, according to Tompkins. New construction included a new control building with a modern laboratory.

"We run tests every day of the week for two reasons," he explained. One is to "ensure the processes are working right" and another is the obligation to do regulatory compliance testing.

The city officials said Vacaville remains in a legal tussle with the state concerning more stringent treatment standards. The city's action is moving "extremely slowly" through the court system, Van Kirk said, with the next court date scheduled for the fall.

In the end, if the city is required to adopt more stringent treatment standards, the officials said the renovation and expansion were completed with that outcome in mind, and the plant thus is ready to accommodate further upgrades.

One of the main measurable benefits of the work, according to Van Kirk, is increased treatment capacity.

"The plant was originally treating right around 10 million gallons per day," Van Kirk. "Now, with the expansion, we've gone to 15 million. That's a pretty substantial expansion of treatment capacity."

Aside from the benefits to the general public, the city manager added, "Having this additional capacity is, I think, critical to our efforts in economic development. Backbone infrastructure like streets and water are all critical things people coming to our community or expanding here really look at closely."

Tompkins said city leaders and officials from neighboring communities are likely guests at the July 26 festivities. The dedication program is from 11 a.m. to noon, with an open house and public tours to follow from noon to 2 p.m.

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