SERVICE LINE
WEST DES MOINES WATER WORKS

WINTER 2024-25 VOLUME 29 ISSUE 1

ASR Well Under Way ■ Regional Water Update ■ Lead and Copper ■ Water Rates ■ PFAS Settlement

RESILIENCY

Drilling for New ASR Well to be Completed in January 2025

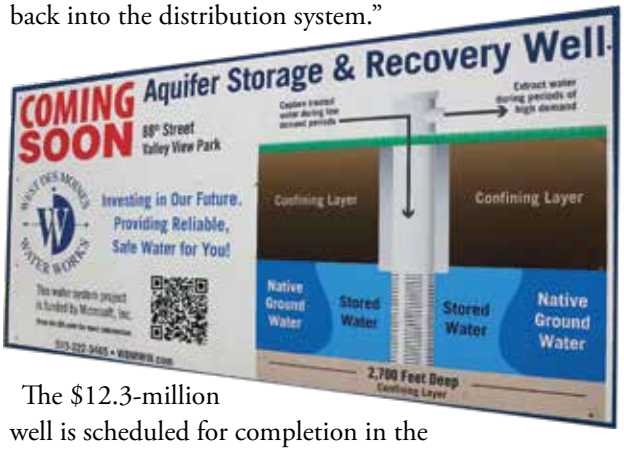
Construction on the new aquifer storage and recovery well (ASR) continues to progress with drilling already more than 75 percent of the way to the targeted depth of 2,700 feet within the vast Jordan Aquifer. Situated next to the water tower in Valley View Park on 88th Street, the well's construction has been humming along 24-7 since September.

"Once started, the drilling cannot be stopped without risking collapse," said Lyle Hammes, superintendent at WDMWW. "We are pleased with this progress, and happy to report that the drilling process has gone largely unnoticed by nearby residents and park users thanks to noise attenuation panels and other measures."

ONE ASR = 120-150 WATER TOWERS

Building this ASR allows the Water Works to store up to 300 million gallons of treated water deep in the aquifer. This stored water is enough to serve customers during peak usage for about 90 days.

"We would have to build 120 to 150 elevated towers to store the amount of water we can hold in one ASR," Hammes added. "When we extract the water, it requires only minimal treatment before pumping it back into the distribution system."



The $12.3-million well is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2026. Water Works will inject the ASR with excess water from its distribution system during periods of low usage. The ASR valve is opened, and the pressure in the main pushes water into the 2,700-foot deep well.

Filling the well will take about three months and occur mostly during the winter. The treated drinking water creates a sort of storage bubble that grows during injection and shrinks during extraction.

In addition to the ASR, the project includes a control building and a water main connection to the distribution system.

Microsoft Inc. is funding the construction of the ASR as part of its water stewardship partnering with WDMWW and the community.

"Building an ASR has been part of our long-term plan, and we can build it now as a result of our work with Microsoft to prioritize water efficiency and resiliency," explained Christina Murphy, general manager of WDMWW. "Adding an ASR allows us to maximize our existing capacity and delay the higher cost of expanding our treatment facilities. It's a significant benefit to our ratepayers."

Layne Christensen of Commerce City, Colorado, is constructing the ASR. It is one of only a few companies in the U.S. that specialize in this work. Pictured left is the drill stand and the noise reduction panels sitting adjacent to the park and a close-up of the drill site.

NEWS FROM THE WEST DES MOINES WATER WORKS

DID YOU KNOW ?

CIWW Founders

- Ankeny
- Clive
- Des Moines Water Works
- Grimes
- Johnston
- Norwalk
- Polk City
- Warren Water District
- Waukee
- West Des Moines Water Works
- Urbandale Water Utility
- Xenia Rural Water District

REGIONALIZATION

Board Approves Transfer of A.C. Ward Treatment Plant to CIWW

The West Des Moines Water Works Board of Trustees approved the transfer of certain water production assets including A.C. Ward Municipal Water Treatment Plant to Central Iowa Water Works (CIWW) in November. The transfer marks a pivotal step in finalizing CIWW as the metro area's regional drinking water production authority.

CIWW
CENTRAL IOWA WATER WORKS
STRONGER TOGETHER

For the past three years, WDMWW along with 11 other founding entities has been negotiating a 147-page agreement that sets out the processes, responsibilities, operations and governance of CIWW. Those agreements were approved, signed and filed with the state of Iowa in April of 2024, and each founder selected representatives for the board of trustees.

Grimes and Polk City are transferring their respective water treatment plants to CIWW including Fleur Drive, L. D. McMullen Treatment Plant at Maffitt Reservoir and Saylorville Water Treatment Plant.

WDMWW is well represented in the new regional authority with trustee Jody Smith serving as chair of the CIWW board and WDMWW Chair Scott Brennan serving as chair of regional authority's finance and audit committee. Murphy as well as Superintendent Lyle Hammes, represent WDMWW on the CIWW technical committee.

"Our goal was to stand up CIWW by January 2025, and we're on schedule to meet that timeline," Smith said. "I am pleased to say that we have accomplished so much in large measure as a result of the cooperation and collaboration among CIWW board members and the staffs of the founding entities."

Jody Smith, CIWW Board Chair

Scott Brennan, CIWW Finance & Audit Chair

Christina Murphy, Member, CIWW Technical Committee

Lyle Hammes, Member, CIWW Technical Committee

"Where we once owned all of a water treatment facility that produced 10 million gallons of water a day, we now share in the governance of a metro-wide water agency with the capacity to produce an average of 135 million gallons of water a day," explained General Manager Christina Murphy.

CIWW does not replace or eliminate the water utilities or water department of the founding communities. In fact, WDMWW ratepayers now own part of a larger system that serves nearly 700,000 people in Central Iowa. Each founding entity will purchase all of its water from CIWW and continue to set their respective water rates, operate and maintain their local distribution system (mains and water towers), and provide customer service to their ratepayers.

Even though A.C. Ward's ownership has been transferred to CIWW, the Water Works will continue to operate the plant under a 20-year contract. Likewise, Des Moines Water Works and the cities of

Since holding its first meeting in April, the board has transformed CIWW from theory to reality, putting in place the necessary financial administration, banking relationships, legal counsel and business processes. In October, the board hired CIWW's executive director, Tami Madsen, a water industry veteran who ran a similar regional water utility in North Dakota.

A major impetus for creating CIWW is the future need throughout the metro for increased water treatment capacity. The regional structure allows for shared governance, collaborative planning and distributed costs for the construction and development of additional treatment.

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OPERATIONS

Trustees Approve Modest Rate Increase for 2025

WDMWW's Water Rates are the Lowest in the Metro

The Board of Trustees of West Des Moines Water Works have approved a 3 percent increase in residential water rates for 2025, while maintaining the same basic service charge from 2024. The new rates are effective January 1.

For a typical WDMWW customer using 4,000 gallons of water a month, the rate change to $6.78 per thousand gallons per month amounts to a nominal increase of 80 cents on their monthly bills.

"Our staff continues to do an excellent job in managing expenses and improving the system with capital projects that will augment our water resiliency and distribution integrity," said Scott Brennan, chair of the WDMWW Board of Trustees. "Their hard work allows us to maintain the lowest water rates in the metro."

HIGHER RATES FOR IRRIGATION

In 2023, the board implemented a new pricing model that bases customer rates on when and how water is used. As a result, irrigation rates are set independently from domestic water use rates. In 2025, irrigation rates will also rise by 3 percent to $8.49, an increase of 25 cents per thousand gallons.

"It bears repeating that municipal water remains a great bargain. A gallon costs a fraction of a penny and it's accessible at any tap in your house," noted

Christina Murphy, general manager. "Our rates reflect the careful management of not just the current year's budget but the health and integrity of the water system."

MUNICIPAL WATER STILL A GREAT BARGAIN

For example, WDMWW continues its four decade practice of systematically replacing old cast-iron mains before they become an expensive problem and lead to water disruption.

"We traditionally produce about 70 percent of the water we sell and purchase the remainder from Des Moines Water Works. Starting in 2025, we will buy all our water from Central Iowa Water Works, the regional wholesale water authority," Murphy explains. "Joining CIWW means that we have a voice in wholesale rate-pricing for the water we provide whether it comes from A.C. Ward or McMullen."

WDMWW Completes Lead & Copper Survey; No Lead Pipes Found

West Des Moines Water Works to date has found no lead in the service lines of its customers as part of a survey required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

As part of the EPA's Lead and Copper Rule Revisions, all water providers were tasked with surveying customers about the materials used in their service lines, the pipes that bring water from the main to the home.

Lead poses a risk, especially to children, when it leaches into the water supply. The EPA prioritized the identification and replacement of all lead pipes.

WDMWW submitted its report to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources on Oct. 8, 2024.

However, there is still more to do.

"We thank all the customers who completed the survey," said William Mabuce, principal engineer for water distribution. "For those who didn't, we are obligated to send an annual letter until the service line material in their homes is confirmed."

It's not surprising that West Des Moines has no reported lead service lines. The city has prohibited the use of lead in plumbing since 1985.

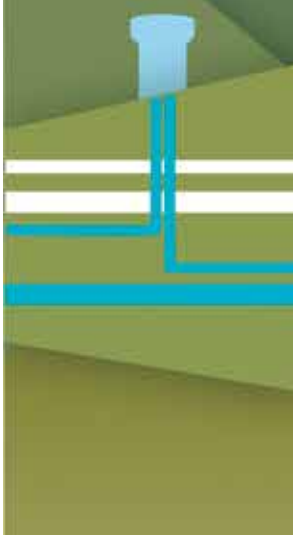
"A significant percentage of homes here were built after 1985 and those are at low risk of having lead pipes and fixtures," Mabuce added.

You can check the recorded status of your service line here: https://tinyurl.com/2cxt7wya. If you have not completed the survey, it can be found at: https://shorturl.at/aACWX

DID YOU KNOW?

Ironic Weather

As it turns out, 2024 was soggy and dry depending on the month. For example, July 2024 was the sixth wettest on record, while the fall was fifth warmest as a result of several days of 80 degrees plus temperatures.



WDMWW Claims $3-Million in Forever Chemical Settlement

CLASS-ACTION LITIGATION AGAINST 3M AND DUPONT

West Des Moines Water Works has submitted a claim for at least $3 million in the class action lawsuit settlements against 3M and DuPont concerning the use of PFAS or "forever chemicals" in fire fighting foam.

The litigation, formally known as the Aqueous Film-Forming Foams (AFFF) Products Liability Litigation, involves the contamination of as many as 12,000 public water systems including several across the state of Iowa. The entirety of the settlement totals $12.5 billion.

"We joined the litigation in 2022 after we had detected PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in several of our shallow wells in late 2021," explained Christina Murphy, general manager of WDMWW. "As an individual water system, it would have been prohibitively expensive to litigate this contamination on our own."

PFAS compounds are often referred to forever chemicals because they do not break down over time and prolonged exposure to these substances has been linked to several cancers

"The elevated levels of PFAS in our water sources have forced us to minimize the use of some wells and stop using a couple more," Murphy added.

"We have sufficient source water in our deep and shallow wells to provide safe reliable drinking water that is compliant with all new PFAS regulations, and we are working to identify alternative well sites that are free of forever chemicals."

SETTLEMENT TO BE USED FOR NEW WELLS

When the settlement funds are received, the Water Works will invest the money into developing new wells and addressing the treatment of PFAS at the A.C. Ward plant.

PFAS emanate from man-made chemicals used in a variety of manufacturing applications and products including carpet, waterproofed clothing, cookware coatings such as Teflon, fire-fighting foam and food packaging, just to name a few.

This PFAS lawuit is the largest of several actions concerning contamination from forever chemicals. Some legal experts believe that PFAS may eclipse the "Big Tobacco" settlement.

Fire-fighting foam is one of many products made with PFAS chemicals.

Products Known to Contain High Levels of PFAS

- Nonstick cookware
- Water-resistant fabrics
- Fire-fighting foams
- Fast-food packaging
- Cosmetics
- Paints and sealants

Source: The EPA

CIWW Update

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The CIWW Technical Committee has identified two major projects for adding capacity—the expansion of the Saylorville plant and the development of a new 12-mgd plant near Van Meter.

"The cost-sharing and collaborative governance in the CIWW model is extremely attractive. All the members participate in expense on these capital projects, but those who directly benefit pay more," Murphy explained. "Water is already one of the best deals around. You can get a thousand gallons for under $7.

"We know that the cost to WDMWW ratepayers for building new treatment facilities will be far less under CIWW than trying to add new production capacity on our own. This model helps us better serve our customers, while maintaining affordable rates," Murphy added.

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