

City of Atkins

Wastewater Treatment Improvements

Project History and FAQ's

Project History:

- 2006: DNR issued new Water Quality Standards with lower limits on wastewater discharge of ammonia nitrogen and e. coli.
- 2012: Atkins was issued a DRAFT discharge permit. The draft was open for a 30 day public comment period.
- 2013: Atkins was issued a new discharge permit with lower limits for ammonia nitrogen and e. coli along with new limits for total nitrogen.
- 2013-14: Snyder & Associates and City conduct studies to find alternatives for meeting new lower discharge limits and options to finance the project.
 - Factors that helped to establish treatment needs:
 - Existing treatment plant (lagoon - circa 2000) already at maximum capacity due to population growth.
 - Lagoon treatment not capable of meeting lower ammonia nitrogen levels.
 - City anticipates significant population growth over next 20 years.
 - Pursuit of most economical solution to minimize impact on City.
- Early 2015: City discussions on financing. Agree to pursue State Revolving Fund (SRF) 0% Planning and Design (P&D) loan to proceed with design.
- 2015-16: Snyder & Associates and City prepare and finalize the construction documents and obtain DNR approval
- July 2015: Public hearing held at the regular council meeting with regards to the environmental impacts for the new treatment plant. No written or verbal comments received.

- Late Summer 2015 - Spring 2016: City discussions on how to finance the project with a combination of General Obligation Bonds and an SRF Construction Loan.
- February 2016: Public bid letting; lowest bid of \$5.62 Million awarded to WRH, Inc. of South Amana.
- March/April 2016: City finalizes financing options.
- July 18, 2016: Public hearing for GO refunding agreement and SRF loan.
- Spring 2016: Construction begins
 - Replacement and upsizing of pumping station.
 - Construction of activated sludge treatment plant at lagoons.
 - Repurposing lagoons for high flow events.
- Fall 2016: City closes on SRF Construction Loan with a public hearing.
- October 17, 2016: Public Information Meeting held at City Hall.
- There was a public hearing at the Nov. 7 2016 meeting for sewer rates and had the first of the three readings for ordinance change for increasing sewer rates.
- Project completion scheduled for Fall 2017.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- Why does the City have build a new wastewater treatment plant?
 - The facility Atkins cannot currently meet the discharge limits for ammonia, total nitrogen, and e. coli as required by the new permit. The ammonia limits were drastically reduced and the e. coli limits were introduced through 2006 water quality legislation that has finally caught up with Atkins and many other similar facilities.
- When is Atkins required to be in compliance with the new DNR permit?

- The permit required compliance schedule is as follows, but has experienced some delays due to the DNR backlog of project review.
 - Submit Facility Plan by June 1, 2014
 - Submit Final Plans and Specs by September 1, 2015
 - Complete Construction by June 1, 2017
 - Achieve compliance with ammonia nitrogen and e. coli limits by July 1, 2017
- Why does it cost so much when the City just built the existing plant in 2000?
 - Lagoon treatment is not capable of meeting the much lower ammonia nitrogen limits, mainly due to cold weather hindering the process. The new treatment processes are completely different, but the lagoons constructed in 2000 have been incorporated into the new treatment plant to reduce the size and investment.
 - The City has experienced significant population growth, outgrowing the capacity of the treatment lagoons. The City continues to anticipate significant population growth due to the soon to be completed Hwy 100 bypass, and accommodating for that growth now is significantly less expensive than constructing or adding on at a later date.
 - The City is now investing in a treatment process with greater flexibility to be expanded at a later date if necessary, and with greater potential to meet future anticipated nutrient limits that are making their way into the state requirements.
- Did the City look for and what grants are available for wastewater treatment projects?
 - Grants: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); USDA; Wastewater Treatment Financial Assistance Program (WTFAP)
 - City not eligible for grant funding on the basis of affordability criteria based on the median household income determined by the most recent census.
- How is the City paying for this project?
 - Combination of \$1.75M in GO bonds (property taxes) and \$6.5M State Revolving Fund (SRF) Clean Water Construction Loan (sewer rates).
- Why are the limited income residents paying as much as a large family?
 - Everyone is paying based on the amount of water they use with the exception of the debt service fee everyone is paying. The debt service fee is considered guaranteed income and was a recommendation of the Municipal Advisor to maintain steady rates for longer terms.
 - Don't know of a legal way to adjust the sewer and water bills according to income limits, but other options are being discussed by the City.