



EDITORIAL

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World Water Day: Everyone has a role to play in the connection between water and climate change

We already know that combatting climate change will require quick work across multiple fronts, but one often-overlooked area is how water and water infrastructure play a role in mitigating climate change. This connection between water and climate change is the theme of World Water Day 2020, an annual United Nations observance focused on the importance of fresh water. While this is an international observance, we all have a role to play and the good news is that every action, large and small, can have a positive impact in our shared fight against climate change.

Just as climate change has implications for water, water has implications for climate change, and nowhere is that more apparent than at Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District's Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant. In order to transport and treat wastewater, the District must use a significant amount of energy, which produces greenhouse emissions. To partially offset greenhouse gas emissions, we purchase a small allotment of renewable energy credits each month through our energy providers, Madison Gas & Electric (MGE) and Alliant Energy.

But we realize we can do more and in honor of World Water Day, the District purchased renewable energy credits from MGE and Alliant equivalent to the District's daily energy use and went 100% renewable for the day. This is roughly equivalent to powering 2,667 U.S. homes with renewables for a day and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by about 62 tons.

Beyond World Water Day, the District is working on longer-term solutions to minimize its emissions and mitigate climate change. We already offset more than one-third of the plant's energy from biogas produced at the plant, which prevents the combustion of approximately 42.5 million pounds of coal per year. We have new building standards for energy efficiency, and we're kicking off an energy management plan to identify more ways we can reduce energy demand and increase resiliency and redundancy at the plant and throughout the collection system. These actions help us do our part in the fight against climate change and allow us to be better protected from climate-related disruption.



Just as the District is honoring World Water Day, we hope area residents, businesses and communities make their own commitments to honor the intersection of water and climate change. Aside from purchasing renewable energy credits from your utility provider (both MGE and Alliant offer this option to residential customers), there are other simple actions we all can take, such as limiting our showers to five minutes; choosing plant-based meals; turning off and unplugging electronic devices not in use; composting; shopping sustainably; and much more. Every action, large and small, can have a positive impact in our shared fight against climate change.

We can no longer afford to wait, and we all — individuals, businesses, communities, government agencies and policymakers at all levels — must put water at the heart of climate change action plans. We all have a role to play, and every action we take will help move us in a positive direction.

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We are a passionate and experienced resource recovery team that aims to protect public health and the environment. Established in 1930 to protect the lakes and streams of the upper Yahara watershed, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District t serves about 380,000 people in 26 Madison-area customer communities covering about 186 square miles. The District owns and operates 142 miles of pipe and 18 regional pumping stations that convey approximately 41 million gallons of wastewater to the Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant daily. Organized as a municipal corporation, the District is a leader in sustainability and resource reclamation. The District is celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2020.

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