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**Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District celebrates 90 years**

*The District continues to lead with its commitment to sustainable wastewater management, local resource protection*

**MADISON, WIS.** — While Madison’s first wastewater treatment was built more than 120 years ago, this Saturday, Feb. 8, marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District and the region’s collaborative commitment to protecting human health and the environment through responsible wastewater management and recovery.

“The Madison area has always been an early adopter in sustainable wastewater management and local resource protection,” says Michael Mucha, the District’s Chief Engineer and Director. “I am proud that our Commission, our staff and our communities have continued to make clean water a priority since the District was formed in 1930.”

The area’s wastewater management efforts date back to the late 1880s, when 18 districts around Madison were served by public sewers that discharged sewage into lakes Mendota and Monona. While this provided a new convenience to citizens, they quickly expressed their concern about discharging raw sewage into their beautiful local lakes. As a result, the city authorized the first sewage treatment plant in 1898, nearly 50 years before most other communities had such a facility. While that plant was abandoned a few years later when it was determined the technology it used couldn’t produce high-quality effluent (cleaned water discharged back to nature), it was replaced by a septic tank and cinder filter plant located on the isthmus near the Yahara River. With the growth of Madison, this plant became overloaded and was replaced in 1914 with the Burke Plant on Madison’s north side, which is credited as being the first trickling filter plant in the United States.

As the city’s growth continued, an additional sewage treatment plant was needed and in 1928, the Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant, the current home of District operations, was brought online. Just two years later in 1930, driven by growth in surrounding communities and a rally cry for a more unified, metropolitan approach to sewage collection and disposal, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District was established in Dane County Court as a municipal corporation. The District is one of the oldest regional sewer utilities in the United States.

Today, the District 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. To put that into context, if wastewater came to the plant via semi-trailer, a truck would come through the gates every 11 seconds.

Driven by a passionate and experienced resource recovery team dedicated to protecting public health and the environment, staff fulfill the District's mission not only by responsibly treating wastewater, but like their predecessors, through sustainability, adaptability and innovation.

For instance, the District has taken a pioneering, multi-pronged approach to reducing phosphorus in local waterways. Phosphorus is a valuable resource found in fertilizer and is required to help plants grow, but too much phosphorus can cause dangerous and unsightly algae blooms in our waterways. In 1999, the District modified its biological treatment processes to remove most phosphorus from the wastewater, and in 2014, took that to the next level by installing cutting-edge technology to harvest phosphorus from wastewater to produce a valuable fertilizer product. The District is also a leader in adaptive watershed management through Yahara WINS, a collaborative effort among municipalities, farmers, landowners and others to implement land-based practices to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering local waterways.

District staff are also setting the pace for reducing salt pollution in local waterways through innovative public outreach and education activities.

"Today, as in the past, the District continues to strive to improve its methods and capabilities in the treatment and resource recovery of our wastewater to further enrich our lakes and streams. By promoting resiliency and adaptability, the District is poised to meet the challenges of the next 90 years," says Commission President Thomas Hovel, who has served the District since 1992. "On behalf of the Commission, I want to thank all those who have been a part of the District to meet its goal of clean water."

Adds Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway: "Happy 90th anniversary to the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District. This is an important reminder of the major public health and environmental protections that you provide in our region every day."

The District will be celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout 2020, including an open house in the fall. Keep up to date with District activities by checking its website at [madsewer.org](http://madsewer.org), or by following the District on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram.

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