

Upgraded wastewater treatment plant opens

In mid-May the City dedicated a \$37 million upgrade to its wastewater treatment plant. The state-of-the-art plant is the largest project in the City's history and takes raw sewage and turns it into almost — but not quite — drinking quality water.

The result is water almost clean enough to drink, but most people can't get over the so-called "yuck" factor.

The plant cost came in at almost half-price when the construction market dropped, and also when the City obtained a loan through the state.

The plant upgrade boosts capacity to 12 million gallons a day, which should handle a population of about 120,000 people.

But that treatment capacity could also be used to support a number of "wet" industries, those



The ultraviolet light treatment glows green as the sun sets. that use a lot of water in their production.

Some industrial processes discharge lots of effluent, whether it is a food processor or a light manufacturer. Having the

plant capacity allows the City to attract those kinds of job creating businesses.

The 1973 Clean Water Act required local governments to treat wastewater so that when it

re-enters rivers and streams it is fishable and swimmable. The discharge from the City plant meets those standards, and newer ones that have been added.

The City's wastewater undergoes tertiary treatment, one of the few plants in the state that currently goes through such stringent requirements.

After going through the standard treatments where settling basins and bacteria digesters remove large quantities of waste, tertiary treatment uses fine filters and clarifiers to remove some of the smaller materials in the water.

Then ultraviolet lights are used to disinfect the effluent, without the use of chemicals that can promote algae growth and create other cleanup issues. The finished product ends up cleaner than the slough it enters.

We still need to conserve water, even though it was a wet winter

It was a wet winter with a series of rain storms drenching the Central Valley.

All the rain helped the snow-pack and filled reservoirs around the state. However, it doesn't provide a lot of direct help to Merced water users.

The City water supply comes from aquifers, which are layers of water that are a couple hundred feet below ground.

The drops that soaked into the soil this winter will take a long time to sink to the water table, so it can take decades (or more) to

recharge those aquifers.

Use water wisely

The City has been advocating water conservation since 1993 when it passed an ordinance creating the Odd/Even watering schedule shown below. This schedule is in effect year-round.

No watering is permitted during the midday hours from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. That is the hottest part of the day, and the time when the water you apply to your plants is most likely to evaporate into the air instead of sinking into the ground.

Odd/Even Address Watering Schedule

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Water from Midnight to 11 AM and 7PM to Midnight	ODD	DO NOT WATER ANYTIME	EVEN	ODD	EVEN	ODD	EVEN

NO MIDDAY WATERING — 11 AM to 7 PM ON ANY DAY

Merced City Council

Mayor Bill Spriggs
 Council Members:
 Bill Blake
 John Carlisle
 Michele Gabriault-Acosta
 Noah Lor
 Josh Pedrozo
 Mary-Michal Rawling

Contact the City Council by email at Citycouncil@cityofmerced.org, by calling 385-6834 or writing to Council members at the Civic Center address below.

Council meetings

The Council meets on the first and third Monday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers in the Civic Center, except when there is a holiday, such as July 4, then it is on July 5. The agenda is posted online at www.CityofMerced.org.

Contacting us

The Web site, www.CityofMerced.org, contains City Council information, the Muni Code, General Plan and other information. Contact the Newsletter at newsletter@CityofMerced.org, call the Public Information Office at 385-6232 or write:

Merced Civic Center
 Attn: Public Information Office
 678 W. 18th St.
 Merced CA 95340

The Civic Center is open Monday-Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., except holidays.

Call us

City Council385-6834
 City Manager385-6834
 City Attorney385-6868
 City Clerk388-7100
 Airport385-6873
 Code Enforcement.....385-6861
 Finance388-7900
 Inspection Services385-6861
 Personnel.....388-7100
 Planning Department.....385-6858
 Public Works (7:30-4:30) ...385-6800
 After hours385-6905
 Parks/CommServices385-6855
 Utility payments.....388-7289

IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911

Fire Department.....385-6891
 Police Department385-6912

Ask the City: Let's show some pride of ownership

Ask the City is an ongoing column answering questions that have been submitted to us by mail, email or phone. Readers can submit their questions to the addresses in the column on the left.

What can we do to encourage property owners to maintain their properties and keep them looking good? We need to have some pride of ownership.

BG

The caller is a long-time Merced resident who lamented that there are some properties — both homes and businesses — that are looking run down.

Some are rentals, some are owner-occupied, but all are in need of more TLC (tender, loving care). The caller is hoping that the responsible parties might have their pride rekindled with a wake-up call. He is tired of seeing trees dying, cars jacked up on driveways, paint peeling on houses and general signs of neglect.

There are a few causes of those neighborhood issues: absentee landlords, foreclosures and negligent neighbors.

The City's Code Enforcement Officers (385-6861) are already busy, but they can help with the first two problems.

They will try to contact the occupant or property owner to fix the problem.



If there are Municipal Code violations, they can begin the process of writing Abatement letters or Citations to address those neighborhood issues.

If it is a serious public health hazard or threat, they can take immediate steps to deal with it.

Part of the problem in today's society is that we don't know our neighbors. We only see them when we are coming home or going to work, then we close the doors and keep to ourselves.

One good way to break that cycle is to start up a Neighborhood Watch. It builds a bond in the neighborhood that helps prevent crimes, but also develops a sense of pride and ownership. Call 385-6912 and ask about the Neighborhood Watch Program.

If it's a pool that has gone stagnant due to a foreclosure, call the Merced County Mosquito Abatement District at 722-1527.

City offices closed for Fourth of July

City offices will be closed Monday, July 4 to observe the Independence Day holiday. Refuse collec-	tion will be delayed for all residential users by one day that week. People with regular collection on Monday	will have their trash picked up Tuesday, and people with Tuesday pick up will get it collected Wednesday, etc.
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Think Green

Not everything goes in your green container

By this month, the plants in your garden are blooming, sending up shoots, branching out, filling the yard with life.

As you prune your way around the yard, there are a few things to remember.

Most items will go into the green container. Lawn clippings, small branches, tree and shrub trimmings, leaves, all can get tossed into the green container.

The green waste will be taken to the Highway 59 landfill where it will be ground up, composted and then sold and reapplied to yards, homes and commercial sites.

But some items don't go into the green container, either because they will damage the equipment or contaminate the load.

DON'T PUT IN:

- ✓ Palm fronds or oleanders.
- ✓ Wooden garden stakes.
- ✓ Garden pots.
- ✓ Soil or rocks.
- ✓ Garden hoses. (They don't compost!)
- ✓ Food.

If you need additional green containers you may obtain them at no extra cost, but you have to keep them for a year.

Email publicwks@cityofmerced.org or call 385-6800 to obtain more containers.

If you have a gardening service and don't need a green container you can opt out using the above contact information.