

City treatment plant work in its final stages



The ultraviolet light channels will help disinfect the effluent.

Wastewater plant upgraded, expanded

The expansion of the City's wastewater treatment plant is expected to be 90 percent completed this month. Staff is already undergoing training to learn how to operate the new equipment.

The expansion includes a major upgrade to the facilities. The water being discharged will undergo tertiary treatment, an additional purification step that results in water that is basically drinking quality.

The tertiary treatment involves sending the effluent through a fine filter to clean it up, and then disinfecting the fluid using ultra-

violet light that will kill anything still alive in it. The water flowing out of the plant will be suitable for any agricultural use.

The plant upgrade is designed to expand its capacity from 10 million gallons per day to a maximum of 12 million gallons per day. The plant can ultimately be expanded to 16 million gallons per day.

The treatment plant was built in 1977 and designed to handle secondary treatment. The additional purification is required by new state and federal rules and regulations.

New leaf collector is fast, green, but needs a bit of help

The City of Merced has added the "Trackless" Leaf Loader to its leaf collection program this year. It is a greener, more efficient machine that collects leaves, mulches them and shoots them into a truck to get turned into compost.

The new equipment does leave behind more residue, but City streetsweepers follow behind to clean up the remaining leaves.

The City had been using 21-year-old leaf sweepers that no longer complied with air pollution control rules.

Those units vacuumed up the leaves, but often had to make repeated passes over the leaves to collect them all. This used more fuel and sometimes resulted in accidents from backing up.

The new equipment gathers leaves from a 6-foot wide area, cleaning up neighborhoods at a faster clip.

The vacuum units would suck the leaves into a holding bin on the back. When it was full, the vehicle had to drive to the landfill to deposit its load, slowing down the collection process by up to an hour and increasing the carbon footprint.

The new Leaf Loader shoots the mulched leaves into a waiting truck that heads to the future park site at Mission Avenue and Tyler Road where it will enrich the soil. The leaf sweeping operation is never delayed.

Public Works officials estimate that fuel consumption – and air emissions – will be cut by 50 percent with the new equipment. The leaf collection program is also running ahead of schedule because of the new Trackless Leaf Loader.

The vacuum units were used for three months out of the year, and then parked at Public Works.



The new vehicle can be used year-round.

The leaf attachment can be replaced with lawn mowers, asphalt and concrete grinders and other devices to make it useful in a variety of situations.

In addition, the new equipment is more fuel-efficient and produces fewer greenhouse gases

and complies with existing and pending air pollution regulations.

The Trackless brand vehicle cost \$110,000 to purchase and \$42,000 for the leaf attachment. It would have cost more than \$100,000 to retrofit the aging leaf vacuum units. The old units will be sold as surplus.

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 usually 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 Monday holiday, such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday this month. 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 Council	385-6834
City Manager	385-6834
City Attorney	385-6868
City Clerk	388-7100
Airport	385-6873
Code Enforcement.....	385-6861
Finance	388-7900
Inspection Services	385-6861
Personnel.....	388-7100
Planning Department.....	385-6858
Public Works (7:30-4:30) ...	385-6800
After hours	385-6905
Parks/CommServices	385-6855
Utility payments.....	388-7289

IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911

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

Ask the City: My utility bill went up, again!!!

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.

I just opened my water bill this month and saw it went up again! Why? I don't like that!

Call often received by secretaries in January

Nobody likes to pay more for anything, whether it is

their City utility bill, gas or milk.

Any increases in the utility bill are usually going to occur in January when any new rates go into effect.

But they don't always change. If you look at the sewer portion of your bill it is the same \$40.29 a month that it was in 2009. Lower costs in the construction of the upgraded plant helped keep those costs down.

Overall, the utility bill went up by about 2.5 percent. The money paid from the

utility bill has to be used to provide the services people are getting.

For example, the money from the increase in refuse service has to be used to pay for the fuel, electricity, vehicle maintenance and other expenses of collection. It can't be used to pay for sewer expenses, or fund police officers or any other service but trash collection.

And, FYI, no Public Works (or any other City employee) is getting a raise this year.

Watch the G Street underpass: a work in progress

The G Street Underpass Project continues to be on schedule to open this December. With the installation of the new railroad bridge and the excavation of all the dirt underneath, it is becoming easier to envision how it will finally look.

City residents have been a great help during construction. Please continue to support the businesses affected by the work, slow down in surrounding neighborhoods and watch the photos of the progress on our web page.



Think Green

Healthy Eating and Active Living program here

All of the "green" efforts to recycle, save energy and pollute less are intended to make life better for all of us.

The Healthy Eating and Active Living program in the City is another part of making this a healthier community. Started by the League of California Cities, the program works to improve the quality of life for residents through active lifestyles.

The program was adopted by the City

Council in December. The Department of Parks and Community Services will begin including health and wellness activities in its programs.

The idea is to fight obesity, diabetes, and other health issues by making it easier, and encouraging people to walk, run, and bike around town. It also promotes other activities and exercise that create a healthier lifestyle.

City honors MLK

City offices will be closed on Monday, Jan. 17 to celebrate the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

The annual MLK parade will go from the Amtrak

station to the fairgrounds starting at 11 a.m. Jan. 17. A celebration of his life will run from noon to 2 p.m. at the fairgrounds.

The regular Merced City Council meeting will be postponed one day until

Tuesday, Jan. 18.

Trash pickup for everyone will be delayed one day that week. Monday collection will be on Tuesday, etc.

Garbage collection was not affected by the New Year's holiday this year.