

# Helping Rockford Continue to Invest in Wastewater Treatment Infrastructure

The City of Rockford (population approximately 4,500) is located in Wright and Hennepin Counties, along Highway 55 west of Minneapolis. Rockford operates a Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) that discharges to the North Fork of the Crow River. The average wet weather design flow of the WWTF is 0.651 million gallons per day (MGD). Rockford has been recognized by the MPCA for outstanding operations at the WWTF in 2023 and 2024 (2025 information not yet released).

Rockford has been planning a number of improvements at the WWTF for the past 5 years to address reliability, maintenance, and safety issues. The City has divided the work into two projects as described below.

1. The first project will repair a number of aging components and replace computer/controls equipment at the WWTF. The City is self-funding this project and is currently out for contractor bids. The work is expected to cost about \$2.3 million.
2. The second project is the work related to the City's state bonding request. The City is seeking support of \$2 million to help the City replace the preliminary treatment equipment at the WWTF. The total project cost is expected to be approximately \$3.5 million, as identified in the City's recent PPL application to the MPCA.

## Issues Addressed by the Project

The existing preliminary treatment equipment (screening and grit removal) was installed in 2000 and is at the end of its design life. The City has spent considerable time and money in the past 5-10 years on replacements, repairs, and maintenance of generators, blowers, and other equipment, and it continues to be problematic. Excessive amounts of rags and grit pass through the equipment, which has clogged downstream pipes and pumps. The location of the screen in the bottom of a 41-foot deep lift station leads to challenges and safety concerns. With the proposed funding, the City will:

1. Improve operator safety at the WWTF by relocating the screening equipment to a more accessible location and eliminate the need to use a crane/hoist to lift the cart of screenings out for disposal.
2. Improve screening and grit removal which will help prevent clogging of downstream pipes that could have catastrophic issues with an overflow/release of a treatment basin.
3. Maintain high treatment performance of WWTF to help the City continue to discharge high quality effluent to the Crow River.

## Financial Impacts

The City's 2026 Sewer Fund budget includes annual expenditures of \$931,483 and annual revenues of \$1,116,737, resulting in a net surplus of \$185,254. The City is self-funding the first project, estimated at approximately \$2.3 million, through sewer fund resources. Current sewer rates are comparable to those of other communities in the area. Without grant funding support, the cost per household is projected to increase by 150% over the next three years to finance the second phase of the project, which would not be affordable for the community. As a result, the project may need to be delayed until grant funding is secured or until sufficient funds are accumulated over the next three years to complete the work. In the interim, the City would continue operating the wastewater treatment facility at an increased risk of pipe blockages and equipment failures, which could negatively impact plant operations.