



City of
Blue Earth

Project Fact Sheet for

WATER TREATMENT FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

PROJECT SCOPE

Blue Earth Light & Water (BELW) is proposing to construct improvements to their existing Drinking Water Treatment Facility. The improvements include the addition of a centralized reverse osmosis (RO) softening system that will significantly reduce the treated water hardness and minimize the community's need for point-of-use ion-exchange water softeners and associated salt usage. These improvements will effectively reduce the amount of salt discharged to the City of Blue Earth's Wastewater Treatment Facility and help comply with new regulatory requirements for reducing chloride discharge to the Blue Earth River.

COMPLIANCE ISSUE

The City of Blue Earth's Wastewater Treatment Facility will be receiving chloride limits in their upcoming permit renewal as required by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The permit limits are necessary to address water quality issues due to excessive chloride discharge to the Blue Earth River. Chloride is toxic to freshwater fish and other aquatic life. Significantly reducing chloride from the City's wastewater discharge will improve water quality in the Blue Earth River and downstream watershed.

FUNDING NEEDS

The City and BELW has applied for eligible funding through the State of Minnesota, including the Drinking Water Revolving Fund (DWRF) loan program and the Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) program. PSIG provides grant dollars for water infrastructure projects that address new regulatory requirements for improving water quality, including chloride reduction from the City's wastewater discharge.

The City and BELW is also seeking direct bond appropriations from the State of Minnesota to help finance the project costs not covered by PFA programs. A direct bond appropriation would also expedite the funding process and allow the project to proceed more quickly to help reduce the impacts of inflation. The goal is to minimize the financial burden to the community for upgrading this important infrastructure and protecting the environment.

VALUE TO COMMUNITY

The proposed project provides a significant value to the community, including improved drinking water quality that is anticipated to reduce hardness by over 85 percent (i.e. reduction from 42 grains to approximately 5 to 7 grains of hardness). This will allow residents and businesses to eliminate or reduce the use of their water softeners and associated salt usage. Ultimately, this will reduce chloride discharge to the City's wastewater system to help comply with regulatory requirements and improve the water quality in the Blue Earth River, which is an important water resource for the community.

IMPACT TO USERS

In anticipation of this project, Blue Earth Light & Water has implemented a gradual 10% annual increase in water rates from 2020 through 2024 to help minimize the impact of rate increases following the project completion. Without a bonding appropriation, average user rates are expected to increase by up to \$15 per month in comparison to current rates.

Over the past decade, the community has internally financed over \$13 million in watermain improvements through user rate increases. The community is now asking for assistance from the State of Minnesota to help finance this important project to keep user rates affordable.

PROJECT COST

Total Estimated Project Cost = **\$19,594,021**

State Bonding Request = **\$7,500,000**

CONTACTS

Timothy Stoner
General Manager
Blue Earth Light & Water
timothy.stoner@belw.org
507.526.2191

Mary Kennedy
City Administrator
City of Blue Earth
mkennedy@becity.org
507.526.7336

Jake Pichelmann, PE
Project Manager
Bolton & Menk, Inc.
Jake.Pichelmann@bolton-menk.com
612.750.6505