

CHEERS

Local officials celebrate state-of-the-art water treatment plant

Township officials in Bay County are toasting a new, state-of-the-art water treatment facility providing high-quality hydration to area residents. They were joined by county and city officials, as well as state Rep. Charles Brunner (D-Bay City), at a grand opening celebration held this summer to commemorate the Bay Area Water Treatment Plant (WTP).

The local leaders are equally proud of the collaborative effort it took to make the \$59.9 million plant, which delivers millions of gallons of clear, fresh water to faucets in more than a dozen municipalities, a reality.

"This plant is the biggest membrane filtration water plant in Michigan," said **Dennis Bragiel, Kawkawlin Township** (Bay Co.) supervisor and MTA District 13 director. "This was a joint venture with 10 townships, three cities and the county."

Those municipalities created a "shared-governance" plan for the new plant, which is overseen by a committee of stakeholders made up of officials from each of the participating entities. Said **Tom Paige**, director for the Bay County Department of Water and Sewer, "No new units or layers of government were created for this plant. Instead, a successful 'Bay Area' model agreement was achieved whereby it was determined how best to construct, finance and operate the new Bay Area WTP within the current government structures in Bay County. Truly, this is a partnership that is unprecedented in the Bay area."

The plant, which began water production toward the end of summer last year, uses state-of-the-art membrane filtration technology to filter up to 17.4 million gallons of water per day to 19 public water supply systems serving roughly 100,000 customers. The water is supplied from Lake Huron.

Construction on the facility began in 2013. Project costs were funded through the Bay County Board of Commissioners, including three low-interest Drinking Water Revolving Fund (DWRP) loans and a Local Government Loan Program loan. The DWRP provided \$34 million in loans, with \$7.46 million in principal forgiveness—in essence a grant, due to the green elements of the project such as the membrane system.

"There is a new awareness in Michigan and the country that has underscored the critical importance of a high-quality public water supply to the public health of a community," said Paige, who is also a **Williams Charter Township** (Bay Co.) trustee. "I truly believe that this facility places the Bay area community in a great position with a high-quality public water supply for many years to come. The Bay Area WTP produces awesome water for our customers."