



Media Contact:  
Wayne Scarbrough  
(423) 745-4501 ext. 212  
wscarbrough@aub.org

## **News Release**

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### **AUB GETS HIGH WATER MARK FROM TDEC EVALUATORS**

ATHENS, Tenn. – The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) recently evaluated the water system of Athens Utilities Board (AUB). Out of a possible 100 points, AUB scored 98.

“This is real ‘hats-off’ recognition to our operators and field crews,” said Jill Davis, who heads AUB’s water and wastewater divisions. “To receive such high marks requires that every person involved be dedicated to operating a top-notch water supply and delivery system,” she added.

Indeed, the TDEC assessment is comprehensive and exacting, said AUB’s Craig Brymer.

“Essentially, TDEC assesses our water system from start to finish and all points in between,” said Brymer, who oversees environmental compliance for AUB’s water and wastewater operations.

Just as a financial auditor combs a company’s books to ensure fiscal compliance and proper accounting practices, TDEC’s water-quality auditors follow the flow of water to and through AUB’s system.

“They study our raw water sources, such as wells and springs. They evaluate our system design and review our operations and maintenance practices,” he said. “They effectively follow the water and our stewardship of it from the raw source all the way to the customer’s tap.”

AUB’s Jill Davis said that it is important for a community to know that their utility is diligent when it comes to providing safe drinking water. Dedication to a first-class water system starts at the top and flows throughout the organization, she said.

“To be successful at this level requires dedication at every step. It starts with AUB’s board of directors and general manager allocating sufficient capital to design, operate and maintain the system,” Davis said.

But she contends that the field crews deserve, perhaps, the highest praise.

“They make it happen. They actually build the system and maintain it. They are evaluated on everything from cross-connections that prevent unwanted backflows into our water to their methods of disinfecting pipe when it goes in the ground. Their daily diligence to do things right is what makes our system top notch,” Davis said.

Brymer added that impressing TDEC auditors means not being satisfied with status quo operations.

“We can never tread water, so to speak,” Brymer said. “We have to show TDEC that we are not just maintaining our system but are improving it based on evolving best-management practices and by implementing new, better technology as it becomes available.”

Brymer pointed out that getting a score lower than 98 would not mean that the system was in disrepair. But getting such a high mark is exciting and rewarding, considering the demands of the evaluation.

“What kept us from getting the perfect 100 was tank three,” he said, referring to AUB’s 1-million-gallon water storage reservoir at the top of Wayne Road in Athens. “The tank is not a danger. It does its job; it’s just very old and in need of constant maintenance. I think the two-point deduction was recognition of the aging condition of the tank.”

Tank three was built in 1964. AUB already has plans to build a new reservoir to replace it sometime in the next year.

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