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News Release

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AUB TREATMENT PLANTS EARN TOP OPERATING AWARDS

ATHENS, Tenn. – At its recent annual meeting the Kentucky-Tennessee Water Environment Association (WEA) bestowed two awards of excellence on Athens Utilities Board (AUB) for operations at its wastewater treatment plants.

For the eleventh consecutive year, AUB's North Mouse Creek wastewater treatment plant received the Continued Operational Excellence Award.

And for the first time ever, AUB's newly rebuilt Oostanaula wastewater treatment plant located on Alford Street joined the ranks of the best.

The WEA annually examines treatment plant operations across the region to recognize those having one or no discharge violations in the year.

Neither of the AUB plants had any discharge violations for the year.

AUB Superintendent for Water and Wastewater, Jill Davis, said the awards are the result of many groups working to attain excellence in local environmental stewardship.

"The awards mark a tremendous milestone by the AUB board and our community to attain goals of operating the wastewater plants in an environmentally protective manner every day, around the clock. These achievements put us on the path to having the state imposed moratorium against the city of Athens removed," Davis said.

The city is currently under a moratorium regarding wastewater connections that feed the Oostanaula plant based on the history of discharges prior to rebuilding the plant to state of the art conditions.

Davis is particularly pleased that the Oostanaula plant is operating with such efficiency in returning high quality water back into the environment.

"AUB's operators all work diligently as environmental stewards. In particular, their efforts at the Oostanaula plant have overcome incredibly challenging operational conditions to maintain this level of service during the recent construction renovation," Davis said.

In Tennessee, only Eastman Chemical in Kingsport surpasses the consecutive number of times that AUB has earned this award.

AUB General Manager Eric Newberry contends that the operators make the difference.

“An organization such as Eastman has vast financial and human resources to pull from. When you consider that we are a municipal treatment plant running as lean as possible, this achievement by our operators cannot be overstated,” Newberry said.

Greg Hayes, who oversees operations at AUB’s two wastewater treatment plants, agrees.

“Our operators and technicians are simply some of the best. The single biggest factor in our achieving this year after year is commitment to excellence by our people,” Hayes said.

The bottom line, Davis says, is protecting the health of the public and the environment.

“That’s why we build and operate wastewater treatment plants,” Davis said. “It all comes down to clean water for our local environment and the people who live here.”

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