

City of Hiawatha Recognized for Wastewater System Improvements



Kent Evans, KS USDA Program Director and Hiawatha City staff help students from the freshman class plant fruit bushes in Starr Park in observance of Earth Day.

As you drive along U.S. Highway 36 in Brown County in northeast Kansas, you will find the city of beautiful maples. That's Hiawatha, established in 1857, today with a population of 3,172 according to the 2010 Census. John M. Coe, John P Wheller, and Thomas J. Drummond were responsible for organizing the city. Hiawatha became the county seat in 1858 and the first school opened in 1870. The oldest Halloween parade happens each year in Hiawatha, with the first parade starting in 1914.

In celebration of 2012 Earth Day, USDA Rural Development recognized the city of Hiawatha for investing in its future by partnering with the agency to improve the city's wastewater infrastructure.

The city of Hiawatha was recently awarded a

USDA Rural Development loan of \$998,000 and \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce to make improvements to the city's wastewater system.

The city of Hiawatha utilizes an extended aeration, activated sludge system. With an aging wastewater infrastructure system, this is causing an increase in maintenance costs, sewer main breaks, and excessive water inflow and infiltration.

Effective July 1, 2008, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment found the city of Hiawatha to be in violation of the terms and conditions of the Kansas Water Pollution Control Permit. The monthly discharge monitoring reports (DMRs) provided by the city showed Hiawatha had not been able to consistently comply with the permit limits. The city had failed to meet the permit's ammonia limits for approximately four monthly reports. In other words, complete treatment of the wastewater was being given when entering the

collection system due to excessive inflow and infiltration (storm water). The excessive storm water was flushing out the good bacteria needed for treatment.

In November of 2010, Kansas Rural Water Wastewater Technician, Charlie Schwindamann, smoke tested the concerned areas of the collection system. That work identified 23 inflow and infiltration (I&I) problems. The majority of the problems were manholes and main lines. Most manholes had smoke emitting from them. In low-lying areas, this could allow a significant amount of storm water to enter the sewer system. Some manholes had evidence of infiltration through the brick walls, again, allowing storm water to enter the sewer system.

Recently, the city commission moved to have Ace Pipe Cleaning of Kansas City, MO conduct TV inspection of the system. The total cost will be \$1.90 per foot with an assessment conducted by TREKK Design Group, LLC. Cliff Cate is project project engineer and Galen Lay is project manager.



Crosby Gernon, Hiawatha Mayor and Kent Evans, USDA Program Director.

The city of Hiawatha was recently awarded a USDA Rural Development loan of \$998,000 and \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce to make improvements to the city's wastewater system.



City of Hiawatha Public Works Director Dave Grimm, Project Manager Galen Lay, Manhattan USDA Area Director Dan Fischer, USDA State Program Director Kent Evans, Mayor Crosby Gernon, USD 415 Superintendent John Serevin and City Administrator Lynne Ladner plant shovels in recognition of the funding for Hiawatha’s wastewater improvement project.

Reducing I & I

In April 2011, Hiawatha began inspections of homes and businesses searching for illegal connections to the city’s sewer system. Public Works Director Dave Grimm states that seventy-seven percent of the inspections have been completed. Project Manager Galen Lays comments that “those inspections have had an impact on reducing the amount of water entering the sewer system”. He adds, “Two years ago when I was looking at flow charts at the plant, a one-inch rain would almost cause the treatment plant to bypass. Recently, the city experienced a 2.2-inch sufficient rainfall in 24 hours and the treatment plant did not bypass. With the city’s work on the private sewers this has been a tremendous improvement of the flows to the plant”. Lay also reported to commissioners the cost of the sewer improvement project is running well below what had been projected.

By collaborating with USDA Rural Development and Department of Commerce, the city will be able to inspect



Hiawatha city officials and staff, Kansas USDA officials and the freshman class of Hiawatha High School gathered for this photo on Earth Day.

approximately 20,000 linear feet of sewer lines. Sewer lines that have been structurally damaged will be replaced or rehabilitated with cure-in-place pipe liner. The city will also install computer software at the wastewater treatment plant to automate functions at the plant during heavy rain events.

Mayor Crosby Gernon states, “The financing from the state and federal government will allow the city to comply with guidelines from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment without undue economic hardship on our residents, and also provide needed improvements to our wastewater infrastructure. While some often criticize governmental efforts, the citizens of Hiawatha should understand that the partnering among federal, state, and local agencies made this project a success.”

In celebration of Earth Day, freshman students from Hiawatha High School planted fruit bearing bushes and did other landscaping at Starr Park. Starr Park is located at 10th and Pottawatomie Street. The Hiawatha Foundation for Economic Development (HFED) is considering the park for a \$45,000 grant project. The park will provide garden areas for citizens to raise organic food themselves. The idea is to provide low-income families with an area for gardening, free of charge. The area will also serve those who live in housing or apartments and have no availability for a garden area.

Earth Day is observed annually on April 22 to increase awareness about the role each person can play to protect vital natural resources and safe guard the environment. Since the first Earth Day celebration in 1970, the event has expanded to include participation by citizens and governments in more than 195 countries.

“USDA partners with rural communities to provide financing for water and wastewater infrastructure projects that are vital to the health and safety of rural communities,” states L. D. Kent Evans, USDA Rural Development Community Programs Director for Kansas. “The city of Hiawatha has taken the initiative to improve its wastewater infrastructure, which will help provide a clean environment for current and future generations,” he concludes.

Rita has extensive municipal experience with the city of Troy, KS for eleven years. She was a certified EMT and served as the Ambulance Director for two years and supervised the volunteer staff. Rita also worked on or completed most water and wastewater utility reporting

requirements. Her focus at KRWA is to provide assistance with applications for funding for cities and rural water districts.

