

Big Strides for a Rural Water Utility

Eastern Bartholomew Water Corporation (EBWC) is a rural not for profit water utility that provides drinking water to the surrounding areas of Columbus and rural areas of Bartholomew County.

EBWC started out in 1971 as a small rural utility with the basic intent to provide safe clean drinking water to a small number of rural residents. But since its inception, it has grown into a utility that provides water to nearly 20,000 people as well as to many commercial and industrial customers.

Some fun facts of what it takes EBWC to provide water to that many customers:

1. EBWC uses over 230 miles of water main to transport the water to its customers.
2. EBWC has over 2 million gallons of water stored in tanks throughout the service area.
3. EBWC can pump 5,500 gallons per minute from their ground water wells.
4. EBWC uses two water treatment plants to produce safe clean water to its customers.



I personally have had the pleasure to serve as a consulting engineer for EBWC for over 20 years and have enjoyed helping with the challenges that comes along with that kind of growth. One of these challenges that EBWC brought to us at Banning Engineering seven (7) years ago was how to address the water treatment needs of two aging plants, one of which had been in service since the utility began. To maintain a high level of quality of service to its existing customers and to keep up with strong growth, good planning is a must. We were able to assist in the entire process from planning through financing, surveying, site design, process engineering, bidding, construction administration and finally observation. I'm happy to share that EBWC will be opening a new water treatment plant this summer so they can abandon the two aging plants. The new plant is designed to currently serve all its existing customers and future growth, as well as being designed to be easily expandable to treat 12 million gallons of water a day.

These types of projects don't happen overnight and they all begin with good planning. Last year we had a successful new water treatment plant project put into service for the Town of Pendleton which started with good planning. We are currently assisting a medium sized Hendricks County community on both water and wastewater master planning. Along with these projects, we are also beginning engineering design on a major wastewater project for a Morgan County community that was borne of the master plan we completed. We have another major wastewater project in Decatur County that we recently completed the engineering design and it is getting ready to go to bidding. We had the honor of performing the master plan for that wastewater system as well. All these projects are in addition to the water and wastewater services my team provides to our site development group along with some water and wastewater utility appraisals we prepare from time to time.

Water and Wastewater projects are a major undertaking and take good planning to be a successful project for your system. Being proactive on replacement and expansion projects for your system is very important in maintaining the level of safety and quality of service to your customers. This all takes a lot of time upfront to get to where you can put a spade in the ground. Like they say, there are two good times to plant a tree ~ 20 years ago and today! Let us help you plant your tree today and put a plan in place that sets your utility up for success now and in the future. If you already have the plan in place and need help with the next steps, we can certainly assist with that too!

~ Kent Elliott, PE