

## La Plata earns wastewater system of the year award

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Maryland Rural Water Association (MRWA) is a non-profit 501(c) corporation, founded in 1990. The MRWA's mission is to improve the quality of life in the rural and small communities of Maryland regarding the security, safety, and availability of affordable drinking water, and the proper treatment of wastewater to ensure protection of the environment.

In 1992, MRWA established an Awards Program to recognize outstanding effort and accomplishments of member systems, industry members, and individuals associated with the rural water systems. The Awards Program is a way for MRWA to provide visibility and distinction to its members.

During the annual MRWA conference in early May, La Plata received the Wastewater System of the Year Award. This award was presented to La Plata for the improved quality and consistency of the treatment process used in its Wastewater Treatment Plant and the quality and consistency of wastewater service it provided to its customers.

Over the past five years, a number of major improvements were made to the sewer collection system in La Plata to increase its capacity. As a result, Sanitary Sewer Overflows have become a thing of the past in La Plata.

In 2002, La Plata converted its Wastewater Treatment Plant to a biological nutrient removal process that reduced the amount of nutrients being discharged into the Potomac River and then into the Chesapeake Bay. This upgrade greatly reduced the amount of chemicals being used to treat sewage and was a requirement of the Maryland Department of the Environment.

During the last four years, La Plata's Plant was upgraded to Enhanced Nutrient Removal which reduced the amount of nutrients being discharged even further as a requirement of the Maryland Department of the Environment. The Town elected not to hire an outside firm to manage the construction during this upgrade, instead using Town personnel to perform this function. This not only saved more than \$500,000 dollars but provided a much closer monitoring of the project that generated more than 40 changes in the design that made the process much more efficient and reliable.

The award serves as recognition for the years of hard work by Director of Operations Bobby Stahl, consultant Bill Eckman, and the entire Operations Team, and the Maryland Environmental Service.

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