

BAYWORK Workshop on Wheels in the North Bay a resounding success

By Kory Loucks-Powell

BAYWORK, a consortium of Bay Area water/wastewater utilities working together in the area of workforce reliability, has objectives that include candidate development, staff preparedness, optimized use of existing staff, and cost-effective workforce reliability investments through collaboration. The North Bay Workshop on Wheels conducted by BAYWORK on November 14th combined components that addressed all of these strategic objectives.

Traveling from site to site by bus, Bay Area water and wastewater professionals and college students currently taking courses related to the field visited five North Bay water and wastewater treatment facilities to hear staff discuss their cutting-edge innovations and challenges. Agencies hosting the on-site visits included Marin Municipal Water District, Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District, North Marin Water District, Central Marin Sanitation Agency, and the City of Petaluma.

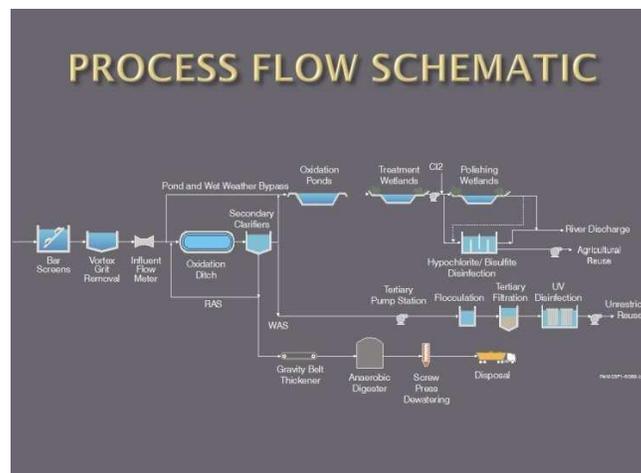
The idea to bring workshop participants to the sites where innovations were being put into practice emerged from BAYWORK's strategic planning process for Fiscal Year 2013-2014. BAYWORK's annual strategic planning process allows signatories (which currently include eighteen water/wastewater utilities, the Bay Area Community College Consortium, and the Cal/Nevada Section of the American Water Works Association) to determine priorities and performance measures for the year to come. Signatories recognized that water and wastewater

treatment staff often get more out of seeing processes in motion than by hearing about them from a stage.

The tour was preceded by gathering surveys from North Bay utilities on their most innovative new processes and practices. During the tour, Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District staff member Gary Wettstein and Jim Kenney from Marin Municipal Water District discussed their agencies' collaboration in treating and delivering treated wastewater for non-potable use. At the Ellis Creek Water Treatment Facility in Petaluma, Matt Pierce talked about their use of engineered wetlands to de-chlorinate treated wastewater effluent.



Matt Pierce, right, Treatment Supervisor at the Ellis Creek Water Treatment Facility in Petaluma, discusses their de-chlorination of effluent using their engineered wetland.



Ellis Creek Wetlands process flow schematic in Petaluma from Operations Supervisor Matt Pierce.

After lunch at Miwok Park, the group heard Marco Jennison from North Marin Water District discuss the challenges of implementing an Actiflo process and

chlorine dioxide for water treatment. At Central Marin Sanitation Agency, Jason Dow described their agency's new Food Waste to Energy program and Chris Finton took the group onsite to observe the new FOG installation in action.

Driving time between sites was also used effectively. Greg Norby from Ross Valley Sanitation District described their use of risk analysis to prioritize asset management investments, and Raj Singh, Control Systems Manager with the City of San Jose discussed the new On-Line Forum capability available on BAYWORK's website.

Since the intent of the workshop was not only to provide a day of training, but also to encourage ongoing information-sharing, workshop participants filled out follow-up request forms indicating their interest in additional visits to utilities, having staff from innovative facilities come visit them, and learning more about the On-Line Forum function on BAYWORK's website.



Karla Guevarra, consultant engineer, and Alexandre Miot, assistant engineer in the process group at the Oceanside facility, both attended the tour.

Karla Guevarra, consultant engineer, and Alexandre Miot, assistant engineer in the process group at the Oceanside facility, both attended the tour. Among their other responsibilities, Guevarra focuses on water recycling and reclamation, while Miot works on the plants food- to- energy pilot project.

“It was well organized,” Miot observed. “The people who hosted us were very well prepared and professional.” Miot said his group is looking into resource recovery and food –to- energy initiatives, so it was useful for him to see what other agencies are doing and learn from their experience.

“The visit to the Central Marin Sanitation Agency Food-to-Energy program was valuable to us as the SFPUC is evaluating the same kind of program for our future bio-solids handling facility,” he said.

Guevarra said the experiences of utilities they toured, particularly those that deal with recycled water, applied directly to her job at Oceanside. “We need to see what other agencies are doing,” she stated. Guevarra said she was most interested in the new recycled water processes at the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District and at the Central Marin Sanitation District, both in San Rafael. Within the SFPUC, she said that they have a pilot Food, Oil, and Grease, or FOG, processor at the Oceanside plant.



From left, Matt Pierce with the City of Petaluma and Chris Finton with the Central Marin Sanitation Agency, smile as Gary Wettstein, Water Treatment Operator with Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District talks about their process of treating wastewater for non-potable reuse.

“By speaking with other agencies and learning what worked and what didn’t work for them, we can learn from their experiences and possibly use that information when similar facilities are brought to the City,” Guevarra said. “As resources such as water and energy become scarcer, we need to find other sources, and it is great to work in the wastewater industry which has the potential to provide both of those things.”



Chris Finton, Treatment Plant Manager with the Central Marin Sanitation District in San Rafael, shows their new Food, Oil, and Grease processor.

Guevarra and Miot highly recommended the upcoming Workshop on Wheels tours for anyone within the SFPUC, but particularly for engineers and operators. Guevarra was impressed by the effort and thought that went into making the day run so well. “It is good to see what other agencies are doing,” she said. “I am glad I went.”

Miot observed that there are a lot of changes and innovations in the world of water and wastewater and it is helpful to connect with area professionals. “We are all public agencies so we should have no problem sharing our experiences,” Miot said. “There are no secrets.”



Participants at the BAYWORK Workshop on Wheels tour of the North Bay after lunch at Miwok Park in Novato, California.

Two more BAYWORK Workshop on Wheels tours are planned for 2014 – the East Bay on March 11, and a South Bay Workshop on Wheels to be conducted later in the spring. Additional information on BAYWORK activities is available at <http://baywork.org>.

On the Resources page of the website, detailed information is available on not only the BAYWORK North Bay Workshop on Wheels, but also all other workshops that have been provided by BAYWORK (see the section on BAYWORK Events). Questions about BAYWORK can be directed to Cheryl Davis, BAYWORK's Chairperson, at ckd@swater.org.