

Expansion of Leoni Township wastewater treatment plant on schedule

Posted by Holly Klaft | Jackson Citizen Patriot April 09, 2009 07:28AM

Work to expand [Leoni Township](#)'s wastewater treatment facility is surging forward.

Towering red steel beams jut out of concrete between farmhouses and rolling acres, marking the skeletal frame of the new building at 8401 Page Ave. that will house treatment labs.

Even in the snow Tuesday, workers toiled to help keep the project on schedule for expected completion in July 2010.

The walls for one basin are in place and concrete and steel work is ongoing, plant Manager Tom High said. Much of the mechanical and electrical work still must be done, he said.

"They're moving along nicely," High said.

Construction Manager Pat Burroughs of [O'Harrow Construction](#) said the \$30 million project is about 15 percent complete and has been running under budget.

The project was originally expected to cost \$32 million, but township officials and the construction company found cost efficiencies, such as cheaper equipment, that lowered the price by nearly \$1.5 million.

A \$34.1 million loan from the [Michigan Department of Environmental Quality](#) is helping fund the project.

Last year, rates for the plant's customers in Leoni and 12 other communities increased by nearly \$100 per year to help cover the costs of construction.

Despite the recent cost savings, officials say sewer rates are not likely to go down before the project is complete. Township Clerk Michele Manke said the township "will definitely pass savings along" if the final cost of the project is less than expected.

Township resident Violet Simpson, who is on a fixed income and was upset by the rate increases, said she is skeptical that prices may fall.

"I doubt that very seriously," Simpson, 67, said. "Nothing goes down anymore, it only goes up."

Township customers pay \$22.45 per month for service, Manke said.

The expansion was needed to meet the DEQ's pollutant standards and help increase the plant's capacity for treating sewage. The current facility can process up to 2.6 million gallons of sewage per day, but the expansion will bring its treatment capacity to 3 million gallons per day.

"Leoni is replacing a system that has been in place for a number of years, and it's just about reached its capacity," High said. "We're moving to a more reliable system, and as the service area grows, we'll be able

to provide reliable and effective treatment."

The current facility, which treats about 2 million gallons of sewage per day, has had difficulty meeting state limitations for pollutants.

The plant incurred more than 200 violations between 2002 and 2005, and drew some violations in 2007. In 2006, the state issued a moratorium on additional communities or housing developments connecting to the system because of the violations.

© 2009 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.