



Maine's Second Largest Clean Water Facility Rebrands to Reflect Fifty Years of Progress

Lewiston Auburn Water Pollution Control Authority to drop the word 'pollution' from title

June 3, 2024 – LEWISTON, Maine – To celebrate Clean Water Week and recognize fifty years of environmental milestones, the *Lewiston Auburn Water Pollution Control Authority* will now be known as the *Lewiston Auburn Clean Water Authority* (LACWA). Built in 1974, it was one of the first clean water treatment facilities in Maine born from the federal Clean Water Act – today there are over 135 across the state. The facility's original mission was to create infrastructure that would improve water quality and stop further pollution of the Androscoggin River, which was one of the top ten dirtiest in America. Smelling of rotten eggs, Maine's second longest river was known for its brown foam, trash, sewage and toxic chemicals floating throughout. The *Lewiston Auburn Clean Water Authority* cleans all water received by regional businesses and residents and returns it to the Androscoggin River – a process that was not in place prior to 1974.

"Fifty years ago, we were in a much different place. In the 70s, our daily work was to create processes and infrastructure to prevent pollution from worsening and our name made sense," said Travis Peaslee, General Manager, Lewiston Auburn Clean Water Authority. "For the last five decades we've informed environmentally sound policies, built needed infrastructure, and invested in sustainable technologies – all of that work has led to incredible progress in improved water quality and standards. Today, the words 'pollution control' no longer reflect our daily work," Peaslee said.

Over the decades, there has been a strong collaborative effort between environmentalists, Maine lawmakers, businesses, residents, nonprofits, and public entities like LACWA to restore and protect water quality across Androscoggin County. Collective progress has been made, and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection is currently reviewing an application to reclassify the river from the lowest Class C to a Class B, which means it is swimmable and fishable.

"When I first laid eyes on our damaged river, I knew it would become my life's work to restore it," said environmentalist Peter Rubins. "Our efforts have led to meaningful results and the river is once again the crown jewel of our community, and a hub for recreational events and activities," Rubins said.

Over the last two decades the cities of Lewiston and Auburn have been undergoing a successful economic and residential renaissance, which can be reflected by an increase in jobs, overall population and new business growth. Recently, Lewiston adopted a slogan "Opportunity Lives Here" and is refining zoning standards to attract new development, increase housing inventory, and add opportunities to allow small stores and restaurants in some neighborhoods. Auburn is working to bring on 2,000 new housing units by 2025 and increase population by 25-percent.

"Cities and towns need proper infrastructure to grow and attract businesses and residents. Economic growth also requires sustaining our natural assets such as rivers and lakes," said Mark Adams, CEO, Sebago Technics, a Maine-based engineering firm. "LACWA has been a leader and instrumental in the growth of the L-A region while preserving and improving our natural assets," Adams said.

Lewiston Auburn Clean Water Authority treats up to 38 million gallons of water daily. In 2023, it treated over 4 billion gallons of water – enough to fill over 6,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools. In 2012, LACWA was the first in Maine to implement technology that creates and harnesses energy during its water treatment process, which is later used to generate electricity and heat. Annually, LACWA generates enough energy to power 267 Maine households and heat 78 households.

In 2023, Bates College students completed a collaborative study on the water quality coming from the treatment facility to determine the impact on the Androscoggin River. The student-led study found that the water downstream of the treatment facility was cleaner than the water upstream, which means LACWA is returning water that is cleaner than the river itself.

“We were really surprised by the results and also by the work that happens at the facility,” said Bates Sophomore Aleisha Martinez Sandoval. “Biologists, engineers, and technicians are doing much more climate-minded environmental work than simply serving as a public utility,” Martinez Sandoval said.

Since 1983, Maine has celebrated Clean Water Week during the first week in June to raise awareness for the importance of protecting our state’s waterways and to raise the value placed on clean water statewide. Launched by Maine State Senator Edward Muskie in 1972, Congress passed the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, which was later called the Clean Water Act.

This year, Clean Water Week starts today, June 3 2024, with events being hosted statewide. In Lewiston, LACWA staff will welcome members of the public to the facility at 535 Lincoln St. on Wednesday June 5th for tours at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., or 1 p.m. Tours will last approximately 60 minutes.

For the Lewiston Auburn Water Authority rebrand video and photos, [visit here](#).

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About [LEWISTON AUBURN CLEAN WATER AUTHORITY](#) (LACWA) is a quasi-municipal entity charged with cleaning water received from Lewiston, Auburn and other surrounding communities. Founded fifty years ago in 1974, LACWA is the second largest clean water treatment facility in Maine, and cleans between 14 and 25 million gallons of water per day. LACWA’s mission is to protect public health and the environment by returning clean water to the Androscoggin River.

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