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Final Approvals Received for New Saco River Drinking Water Treatment Facility

The current drinking water treatment facility was constructed in 1884 and is located in the Saco River floodplain. Biddeford, Saco, Old Orchard Beach and Scarborough are expected to receive water from the new facility in spring 2022.

Saco, Maine — March 2, 2020 — With final permitting received from Maine Department of Environmental Protection in mid-January, all necessary permits and approvals have been obtained to begin construction of the new Saco River Drinking Water Treatment Facility in Biddeford.

The new facility will be located on South Street in Biddeford across the street and uphill from the current Biddeford Water Treatment Facility, which began operation in 1884 and had its last treatment process overhaul in 1936. Moving the facility out of the floodplain of the Saco River eliminates the risk of flooding, which has occurred several times in the history of the current facility, leaving customers without water service for extended periods. Relocating the treatment facility will make the water system more resilient to climate events, and the new facility will feature fully automated treatment systems that will use less energy and less chemicals, reducing operating costs and improving efficiency.

“The design and approval process for the new water treatment facility has brought forward a project aimed at providing the next century of water service to the Biddeford and Saco service area. While the current facility continues to produce water that meets all federal and state standards, a significant upgrade is long overdue,” said Maine Water president Richard Knowlton. “Engineering studies have confirmed that building a new treatment facility is a cost-effective alternative to renovating the existing facility over a 50-year planning horizon. Maine Water is committed to investing in our communities and providing the infrastructure necessary for sustainable, reliable, high-quality water service.”

Maine Water has been working through the design and financing of the project to minimize the cost impact of the new treatment facility on customers and will work with the Maine Public Utilities Commission and the Maine Office of Public Advocate to explore opportunities to phase in a necessary rate increase over time. Even with the new investment, water will continue to be one of the most affordable utilities in Maine, and the company expects to deliver high-quality water service to most customers for about \$1 a day, or about a penny a gallon.

The Saco River will continue to be the sole source of water for 40,000 residents served by Maine Water in the Biddeford and Saco area, which includes Old Orchard Beach and the Pine Point section of Scarborough. Maine Water takes pride in providing customers with clean, high-quality water that is locally sourced, locally treated and managed sustainably. As part of the project and in conjunction with moving the facility across South Street, Maine Water will conserve over 250 acres of open space around the facility to further protect the Saco River and preserve wetlands and natural habitat on water company land.

Construction activities on the site are expected to begin soon, and the facility should be completed in the spring of 2022.

Maine Water serves 32,000 customers, or a population of 100,000, in over 20 communities throughout the state of Maine. For more information, visit www.MaineWater.com.

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