

Marble Falls breaks ground on cutting-edge wastewater plant

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Marble Falls leaders toss the first dirt at a ceremonial groundbreaking May 5 for the One Water Reclamation Facility. The \$86 million wastewater treatment plant is the largest project the city has ever undertaken. Staff photo by Dakota Morrissiey

Golden shovels ceremoniously broke ground May 5 on the largest project ever undertaken by the city of Marble Falls: the \$86 million One Water Reclamation Facility. The wastewater treatment plant, a first of its kind in Texas, has been years in the making.

Nearly six years of planning led up to Monday's groundbreaking at a city-owned site off of Colt Circle Drive in the sprawling fields and hills behind Walmart and Cinergy Cinemas. The project follows a [2019](#) mandate from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality that a growing Marble Falls increase its wastewater-processing capacity.

One Water should be online by 2028 and more than double the city's current processing capacity, eventually utilizing cutting-edge technology to recycle water for reuse if everything goes according to plan.

"This is not just a new plant, it's a new era," said Mayor Dave Rhodes in a city-issued media release Monday. "One Water is about managing every drop wisely to create a resilient, sustainable water supply for generations to come."



Marble Falls Mayor Dave Rhodes introduces the One Water project and recognizes key contributors during a speech at the groundbreaking ceremony. Staff photo by Dakota Morrissiey

Rhodes has been involved with the project from its inception, and spent two City Council terms and his current stint as mayor advocating for it. He term'd out of council service this year and will be replaced by incoming Mayor John Packer, who ran unopposed in the May election.

What makes the plant so unique is how it will process wastewater: The [aerobic granular sludge](#) method uses microbes to break down pollutants more quickly and effectively than traditional systems, expends less energy, and takes up less space.

The One Water facility in Marble Falls will be the first AGS wastewater plant in Texas.

"It's pretty amazing to be able to say that we're part of a project that is cutting edge in the city of Marble Falls," said Robert Adams, a project manager with [Plummer](#) who helped design and guide the city through planning.

A key benefit of the plant is it will eventually allow the city to recycle its used water, reducing its dependence on the Highland Lakes and the Lower Colorado River Authority.

"If droughts continue, (the LCRA has) the ability to say 'turn it off' or 'turn it down,' and it will really change what we can and can't do," Mayor Rhodes explained to [DailyTrib.com](#). "We're looking to take control of our destiny here to the best of our ability. Water is not just what you think it is, like watering the grass and taking a shower. Water is economy. Without it, you don't have one. You don't have a population."



A Texas flag marks the future site of the One Water Reclamation Facility, which will be tucked away on city-owned property amid fields and hills in northwest Marble Falls. Staff photo by Dakota Morrissiey

By the numbers, the One Water Reclamation Facility could process up to 3 million gallons of wastewater a day, which is double the current plant's capacity, and it can be further upgraded for 6 million gallons a day down the road. This should serve the city for the next 30-plus years based on current growth trends, according to Rhodes.

Construction is planned in three phases. First comes the wastewater processing facility by 2028, followed by a preliminary purification plant to test the recycling process by 2030, and finally, pending testing results and TCEQ regulatory approval, a full-scale, advanced purification plant by 2032.

Funding for the project comes from multiple sources:

- \$38.5 million in state and federal grants
- \$40.9 million in low-interest loans through the Texas Water Development Board
- \$4 million from local funds
- \$3 million in zero-percent interest loans

Mayor-elect Packer had this to say at the groundbreaking ceremony:

"The One Water project is laying the foundation for the future of Marble Falls and represents one of the most important investments our community has ever made. An investment not just in infrastructure, but in long-term stability and our economic future."

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