

Michael F. Easley, Governor



William G. Ross Jr., Secretary

## N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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### CITY OF GASTONIA'S WASTEWATER TREATMENT DIVISION BECOMES STATE'S FIRST PUBLIC AGENCY TO IMPLEMENT A CERTIFIED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

RALEIGH - Gastonia has become North Carolina's first governmental entity to become certified for achieving an international environmental management standard for practices established at the city's Wastewater Treatment Division.

Third-party auditor American Quality Assessors USA Friday put its stamp of approval on WWTD's environmental management system (EMS) as being in conformance to the voluntary international standard ISO 14001.

Gastonia's WWTD began development of its EMS in February 1999, when it became one of six members of a DENR pilot program to better understand the implementation of an EMS and its effectiveness in improving environmental performance and compliance, as well as pollution prevention. With assistance from the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance, Gastonia designed and implemented its EMS according to ISO 14001, an international standard that many organizations use as their model for an EMS.

In order to become certified to ISO 14001, an organization must develop a plan to meet the standard's 17 required elements, which include developing an environmental policy, identifying environmental aspects and impacts, devising an environmental management program, training employees to ensure they are aware and capable of completing their environmental responsibilities, and having a system in place to identify and correct any problems and prevent recurrences.

"After attending DPPEA's EMS introductory workshop, we recognized how it could benefit our organization," said Gastonia Public Works Director Donald Carmichael, P.E. "It helps us to minimize our environmental impact, provides consistency over time within our operation, and provides impartial evidence to our customers of our environmental commitment."

Carmichael noted that several of the city's industrial customers were also implementing ISO 14001.

"The City of Gastonia should be commended for being the state's first public agency to step forward and achieve ISO 14001 certification," Bill Ross, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said. "This certification is a status that fewer than one dozen public agencies nationwide have achieved. The adoption of EMSs by North Carolina organizations, public and private, furthers DENR's vision of a healthy environment and a vibrant economy by moving organizations beyond compliance and toward environmental sustainability."

An EMS is a tool that provides organizations with a method to systematically manage their environmental activities, provides structure, and helps them to achieve environmental obligations and performance goals. An EMS follows a Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle or PDCA and can be used by a wide range of organizations – from manufacturing facilities to service industries to agribusiness to government agencies.

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