

Great Plains replaces valves

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Twenty-one water valves up to 18 inches in diameter were replaced over the icy weekend at the Great Plains Industrial Park's water treatment plant on the Neosho River.

The project was undertaken to help reduce the amount of leakage from the 1941 plant, which was originally built to supply water to the Kansas Ordnance Plant, later renamed Kansas Army Ammunition Plant. Great Plains acquired the water operation with the transfer of the plant's nearly 7,000 acres.

Great Plains has been looking for funding options to upgrade the water plant and the distribution system since it acquired the property in 2012. Dividing the expected \$1.3 million project into pieces, CEO Daniel Mann recommended to the board that it move forward with the valve replacement portion immediately, using cash reserves.

"The water plant suffers from long-delayed maintenance, and we're having to make 15 times more water than we sell, just to keep our tenants in business on the park grounds. Day & Zimmermann's operation is particularly sensitive to water needs, so we have no choice but to do whatever is necessary to meet that demand," Mann said.

"But we have to be smart about supplying that water because every dollar we lose through leaking valves and pipes, to get the company the water it has to have, is a dollar we don't have for other needs. Our board of directors authorized moving forward with the valve replacements at its November meeting."

Mann said staff estimates a reduction of 30 percent in the amount of water Great Plains loses by replacing the valves. He said he wouldn't be able to put a dollar savings on the project until they are a week or two into operation, but the savings would include chemical, electrical, labor and other costs.

MCA Construction, Carthage, Missouri, won the bid for the project. It has had preparation crews on-site for several weeks installing red-iron supports and bracings that would allow them to complete the valve installation within a three-day window so as not to force a shutdown of any of the tenants.

Mann said that he and property manager Tim Peoples had serious concerns when the ice storm prediction came up on the radar but that MCA didn't want to back out.

"They just said they would do whatever was necessary to make it work," Mann said.

Mann said the company had both a day and night crew working around the clock to meet the tight deadline.

The project is expected to cost upward of \$150,000.