

For a city that features brewery tours, popular sports teams and a lively lakefront, it is noteworthy that Milwaukee's historic wastewater treatment plant that has attracted more than 22,000 visitors from 22 different countries in seven years. With lines of more than 2,100 eager visitors willing to wait up to an hour for the annual Doors Open Milwaukee event on Sept. 19, 2015, it was clear that the Jones Island Water Reclamation Facility had become somewhat of a hot ticket tour in Milwaukee.

More than 2,100 visitors toured the Jones Island Water Reclamation Facility via motor coach as part of Doors Open Milwaukee. The annual event, which has experienced double-digit growth since its inaugural year in 2011, is hosted by Veolia North America and partner Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD).

The Jones Island Water Reclamation Facility

Gaining Access

For curious visitors interested in what makes a city work, the tours offer a behind-the-scenes peek at machinery and a close-up view of what millions of gallons of water actually look like in motion. It also offers an electron microscope projecting live microorganisms onto a large flat-panel screen.

Before boarding buses, Doors Open visitors walked the "Wastewater Maze" created by an artist hired by Veolia North America's community relations team, which afforded them a view of the wastewater treatment process.

In continuous operation since 1926, the Jones Island Water Reclamation Facility has captured the attention of many area history buffs given the prominent role it has played in Milwaukee's history. Jones Island was one of the first treatment facilities in the world to produce a fertilizer as the byproduct of the water reclamation process. And in 1974, it



Milwaukee's Jones Island Water Reclamation facility treats wastewater and helps protect the public health of 1.1 million people in the Milwaukee area.

By Joyce W. Harms

Historic wastewater treatment plant attracts thousands of visitors

is owned and managed by MMSD and operated and maintained by Veolia North America. Although larger than most—serving 28 municipalities and 1.1 million residents—it is a low-key facility tucked away on Milwaukee's harbor adjacent to the city's port.

The facility operates around the clock to treat wastewater and helps protect the public health of 1.1 million people in the Milwaukee area.

Some visitors' curiosity is piqued by the chance to step inside part of Milwaukee's critical infrastructure for a closer look at the sights, sounds and science behind the wastewater treatment process; while other visitors are drawn to the facility's rich history. Others come to find out where Milorganite, a fertilizer byproduct of the water reclamation process that has been used by lawn experts and gardeners since 1926, is made.

was named a National Historic Engineering Site by the American Society of Civil Engineers in recognition for pioneering modern wastewater treatment.

Beloved Lake

Lastly, Milwaukeeans have an affinity for Lake Michigan. Not only is it the source of freshwater for millions of people within its watershed, but it also is a prized resource for fishing, sailing, kayaking and swimming. There is strong stewardship for Lake Michigan, making local residents eager to learn as much as they can about the systems and infrastructure that help protect it and its watershed.

"Veolia is committed to providing educational tools and resources that help de-mystify the wastewater treatment side of the water cycle, so achieving this 22,000-visitor milestone mark in Milwaukee is one that we celebrate," said John



A rooftop maze at Doors Open Milwaukee



The total number of visitors to Doors Open Milwaukee has grown from 400 the first year to more than 2,100 at the most recent event.

Wood, senior vice president of operations, municipal and commercial business, Veolia North America. "Beyond learning the basic science of the wastewater treatment process, we hope that all of our visitors gain an appreciation for the hard work that goes on day in and day out to protect Lake Michigan and how they can also help protect the lake, too."

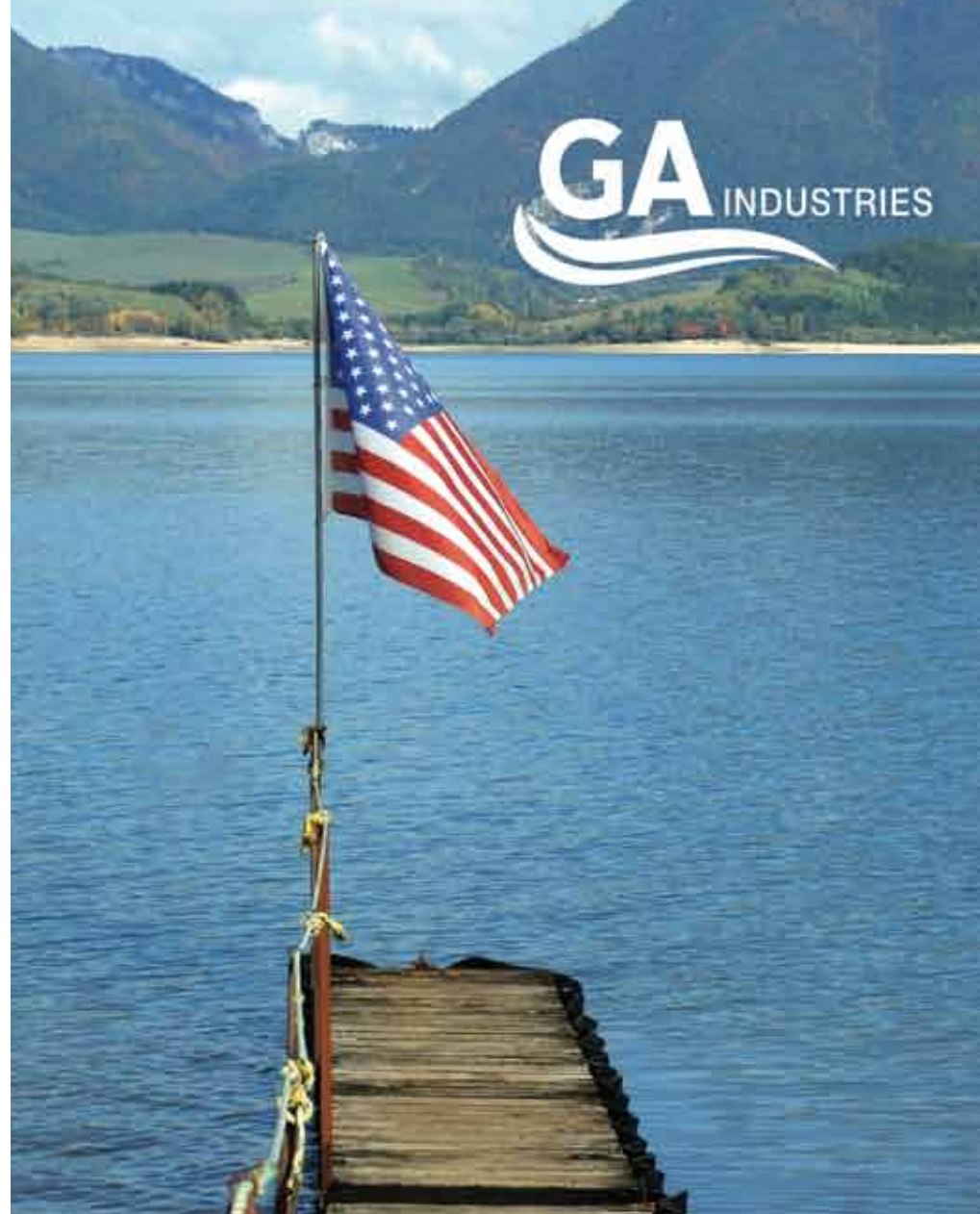
Since the first Doors Open Milwaukee event in 2011, attendance has climbed each year, starting at 400 the first year and reaching more than 2,100 during the most recent event. However, Doors Open is not the only time that the facility is open to the public: Year-round tours are an integral element of the community outreach effort that Veolia North America is charged with executing for MMSD on a daily basis.

"The tour program here at Jones Island is one of the cornerstones of our outreach program," said Steve Jacquart, intergovernmental coordinator for MMSD. "The annual Doors Open event is yet one more way to showcase our high standards for water reclamation at the Jones Island Water Reclamation Facility. It is my favorite day of the year, when visitors are able to see just how important the facility is for maintaining public health while learning something new about modern wastewater treatment processes."

Capable of treating more than 300 million gal of wastewater a day, the Jones Island Water Reclamation Facility—along with its twin sister, the South Shore Water Reclamation Facility—are critical to protecting Lake Michigan water quality and the surrounding environment. The Jones Island plant includes production facilities capable of 41,500 dry tons per year of MMSD's Milorganite biosolids product and control systems for the 500-million-gal Deep Tunnel in-line storage system.

Over the course of the partnership, MMSD and Veolia North America have been recognized with honors, including annual Platinum Awards from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, as well as the Distinguished Service Award from the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships. **w&wd**

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