

Around Town

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**By Billy Ray McKelvy**

**De Queen Mayor**

After years of work, construction is underway on a new waste water treatment plant for the City of De Queen.

The De Queen City Council held a groundbreaking ceremony on Tuesday, May 15. The first step in the project is to excavate a large hole where three concrete tanks will be constructed.

The new plant will use activated sludge technology instead of the present lagoon system. An added feature called a cannibal system will greatly reduce the volume of sludge that must be disposed of.

The new plant is necessary because the old system could not meet discharge limits on ammonia during cold weather. For several years the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality has fined the city for these violations with fines increasing for each successive violation. The City of De Queen has entered a consent agreement with ADED to remedy the situation and fines have stopped as long as the city is making progress.

Not only is the lagoon system not meeting discharge limits, it is expensive to operate. The city spends approximately \$250,000 per year for electrical power and another \$250,000 per year for chemicals. Those two items make up over half of the operating budget. The new plant will greatly reduce the power demand and almost eliminate the need for chemicals. The system should save enough to make the payments on loans to build it.

The project should take 18 months to build and be completed by October 2008. However, it is possible that parts of the system could be put into use before that date.