

Johnson County Wastewater was awarded the prestigious NEHA Sustainability Award for the cogeneration project at the Douglas L. Smith Middle Basin Treatment Facility by the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) at the 2013 Annual Educational Conference and exhibition in Washington, D.C.

The NEHA Sustainability Award recognizes any organization, business, association, individual, or NEHA member who is solving environmental challenges by using innovative and environmentally sustainable practices.

The award criteria were: innovation, sustainability, and/or partnerships, superior practices, commitment and leadership in pursuit of environmental achievement, transferability to other uses, and funding sources.

The project was designed to:

- 1) increase the solids handling capacity of the Douglas L. Smith treatment plant
- 2) use methane from digestion of biosolids and fats, oil and grease from restaurants to generate electricity
- 3) reduce the county's carbon footprint and
- 4) reduce utility costs for the wastewater department.

Johnson County Wastewater is one of the biggest consumers of electricity in Johnson County. The cogeneration project generates enough electricity to power half of the power needs of the entire Douglas L. Smith Treatment plant, which is the one of the largest power users in the JCW system. Based on adjustments for rate changes and changes in use patterns, JCW is seeing a cost avoidance of approximately \$250,000 per year through on-site power generation. The project makes beneficial use of methane and restaurant by-products that were previously treated as wastes.

The \$18.3 million project was funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), and nearly 50 percent of this amount was eligible for principal forgiveness. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was the lead federal agency on the project, and the funds were administered by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

The project has attracted a good deal of attention, starting with the groundbreaking ceremony attended by dignitaries from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Johnson County, and several media representatives.

Since then it has received local and national environmental recognition, been held up by Washington, D.C., dignitaries as an example of a successful program, and included in two video programs.