

Town of River Bend



An Introduction to Water Treatment



Updated August, 2025

The Treatment Process

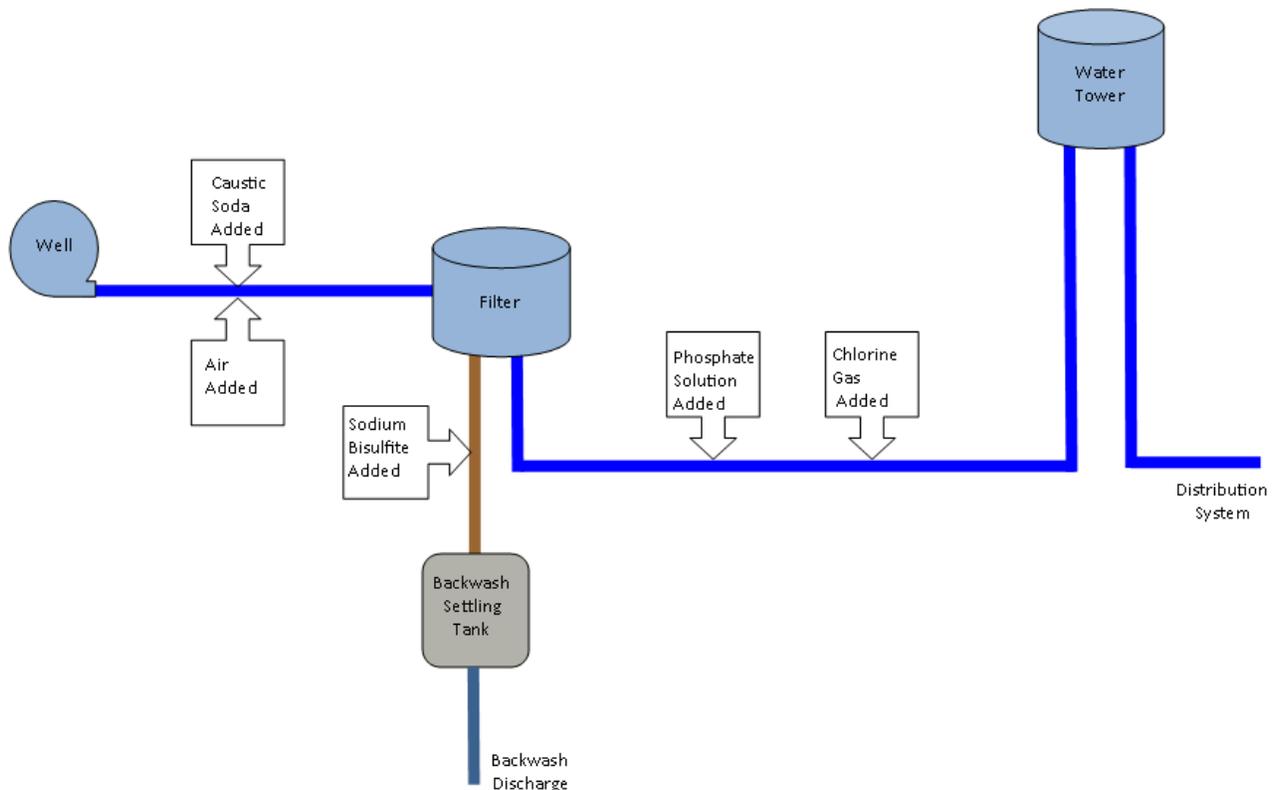
We withdraw water from the Castle Hayne aquifer under a permit granted by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). We do this using three wells with two submersible and one turbine pump. Two wells feed into one water treatment facility and the third feeds our other treatment plant. The goal of the treatment process is to remove impurities and disinfect the water to ensure it is safe to drink and, secondarily, to improve its aesthetic qualities (taste, hardness and color).

As water enters the treatment process our operators inject Caustic Soda (sodium hydroxide) to balance the pH and compressed air to aid in the iron removal process. The pH of our raw water is approximately 6.8. Injecting caustic soda increases the level to closer to 8 before it enters the filter. Making the water slightly basic helps in the filtering process. Chlorine, added later in the treatment process, reduces the pH to 7 or just slightly above a 7 in the finished water.

The water then enters a large pressurized filter containing filter media that removes silt, iron, manganese, and other impurities. After leaving the filter, our operators add a blended phosphate solution, as an iron sequestering agent. This liquid chemical binds with the remaining iron in the water and allows it to be flushed out of the distribution system. The added benefit of this chemical is that, in proper concentrations, it can help inhibit corrosion. We do not add fluorine to our water.

The last chemical added is chlorine, in gas form. Chlorine gas is injected into the water to disinfect it by killing any existing microorganisms that remain in the water. The amount of gas used depends on the amount of water being pumped, and the demand for disinfection. Our operators ensure there is some residual chlorine in the water as it is delivered to our customers. Water without residual chlorine could be a sign that the disinfection process is incomplete, as chlorine is “used” by the process of reacting with the organisms being removed.

The other chemical used in our water treatment process, and one that is not used to treat the finished water, is Sodium Bisulfite. This is a liquid that is injected into the waste water that is backflushed from our filters, a process that uses finished water to clean iron, manganese and other material from the filters. The chemical is needed in order to remove any residual chlorine from the water before it is discharged. This de-chlorination process is required by the wastewater discharge permits we hold for each of our two water treatment facilities.



Testing

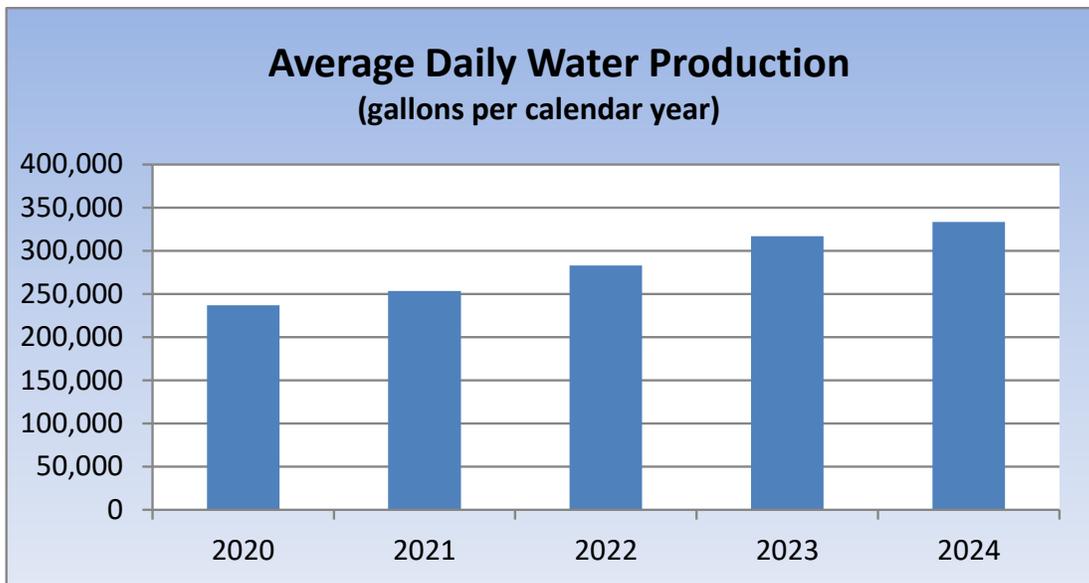
All sources of drinking water are subject to potential contamination by naturally occurring or manmade substances. These substances can be microbes, inorganic or organic chemicals, and radioactive substances. All drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the Environmental Protection Agency prescribes regulations which limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems.

One of the most important things that our water operators do is test to ensure the water we are providing is safe to consume and within the limits specified in our permit. This is accomplished using a combination of internal testing and an outside laboratory. Some of these tests are required by our permit, others our operators do in the interest of process control. Along with an annual inspection, the State of North Carolina also performs periodic tests of our system. In-house tests are performed using equipment and various chemicals we have in our inventory. We perform over 200 quality tests per year. As required by law, each year we produce a Water Quality Report, which documents our water quality, and make it available for public inspections. Each year, our water system is inspected by the State of North Carolina to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations.

Water Treated and Delivered

Our permit from the DEQ, allows us to withdraw up to 925,000 gallons of water per day—over 337 million gallons per year. On average, since 2020 we used less than 31% of our permitted capacity. On average, over the last five years, we treated and delivered 284,744 gallons of water per day.

Water is transmitted to nearly 1,500 customers (meters) through 19 miles of pipe ranging in size from two to eight inches in diameter. In addition to providing water for consumption, our system also stands ready in the event of fire. There are 108 hydrants located throughout the system in order to give the fire department ample access to water for their work. All three of our wells have backup power supplied by fixed location generators.



Due to high levels of naturally occurring calcium, magnesium, iron and manganese in the Castle Hayne aquifer, our water experiences an occasional reddish-brown tint. The EPA classifies these as aesthetic, secondary standards. They are not a health consideration, as are primary standards. The Castle Hayne aquifer is also known to contain hard water. Hard water is measured in mg/L. Soft water is defined as 60 mg/L or less. Hard water is defined as 121-180 mg/L. Very hard water is defined as above 180 mg/L. The number varies, but our water usually contains 180 mg/L, which means that our water is classified as hard water. As described earlier, hardness is an aesthetic quality issue, not a safety quality issue. The Town is currently investigating enhanced treatment options to improve our water quality. [Click here to see the latest water system evaluation report.](#)

Historical Data

The chart below shows water data for the last ten completed calendar years (CY) It provides the total number of gallons produced per year, the daily average amount produced and the percent of our production capacity used. The last line provides a 5-year average for every column.

CY	Gallons	Daily Avg	% of Capacity Used
2015	87,356,000	239,502	25.89
2016	82,688,000	231,292	25.00
2017	72,192,000	197,800	21.38
2018	86,794,000	237,534	25.68
2019	90,729,000	248,531	26.87
2020	86,685,000	236,670	25.59
2021	92,512,000	253,368	27.39
2022	103,369,000	283,123	30.61
2023	115,732,000	317,034	34.27
2024	122,058,000	333,526	36.06
5 year avg	104,071,200	284,744	30.78

Water Operations Staff

Water and wastewater utilities require professional staff to operate and maintain them. State regulations establish the minimum requirements for licensure of our operators and only allow certified people to operate either system. We are fortunate to have several licensed operators on staff. River Bend has enjoyed a long relationship with Lenoir Community College, which has a quality Environmental Science program for students who are interested in working in the water and wastewater field. Some of our current/past staff are products of that program. All operators are required to attend yearly training to maintain their licenses.

James Jones, Jr., Operator

Water Certifications: C-Well, B-Distribution, Cross Connection Control

Sewer Certifications: Collections II, Wastewater II, Spray Irrigation, Physical/Chemical I

Mike Steffa, Technician

Water Certifications: C-Distribution

Sewer Certifications: Wastewater I

Andrew Brooks, Technician

Water Certifications: C-Well, C-Distribution

Sewer Certifications: Wastewater I, Collections-I

Delane Jackson, Town Manager

Water Certifications: B-Distribution

Sewer Certifications: Spray Irrigation