





■ Located just outside Seattle, the Brightwater Treatment Plant in King County, Wash., uses a state-of-the-art membrane bioreactor system to treat an average of 136 million L/d (36 million gal/d) of wastewater. However, the water resource recovery facility's (WRRF's) impressive performance is not why it attracts visitors from across the U.S. and Canada.

Directly adjacent to the WRRF sits Brightwater Center, a "clean water interpretive facility" that is designed to lift the veil behind wastewater treatment, cement the utility's place as a fixture of the community, and encourage visitors to ponder their role in water stewardship. Ned Ahrens/King County (Wash.)



Brightwater Center, constructed in 2011 at the same time as the WRRF, has earned LEED Platinum certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. Nestled within 44.5 ha (110 ac) of parks and wildlife habitat, the center diverts digester gas from the WRRF as a sustainable source of heat, uses recycled water to flush toilets and nourish the surrounding landscape, and produces more energy than needed by the complex.

Additionally, the center features expansive indoor and outdoor event spaces available for the community to rent. In 2017, the center hosted more than 350 parties, meetings, and conferences and attracted around 30,000 guests, according to director Susan Tallarico. Ned Ahrens/King County (Wash.)



In recent years, the site has gained an unexpected reputation among couples looking to tie the knot. Tallarico says Brightwater Center has hosted about 30 weddings since 2013. Most people don't mind the venue's proximity to the Brightwater WRRF, if they notice it at all. A Moment's Reflection Photography





All profits from weddings and other events at Brightwater Center are used to improve King County's assortment of free environmental education programs. Dedicated public education staff routinely lead facility tours, host operator training courses, and coordinate internships for high-school and college students. The utility also pays for transportation to bring underserved school groups to the center for hands-on lessons in water topics. "Utilities and government in general are seeing the importance of being open and transparent and having a relationship with their community," Tallarico said. Ned Ahrens/King County (Wash.)



Wedding attendees need not worry about foul odors from the Brightwater WRRF thanks to investments in sophisticated odor control measures totaling about \$80 million, Tallarico said. When King County developed the Brightwater complex on the site of a soup-making factory, neighbors who were already used to overpowering scents feared the worst.

But from inside Brightwater Center and on surrounding walking trails, the only evidence of the WRRF's location is museum-style exhibits that teach guests about water conservation and wastewater treatment. "There's never been anyone who's even asked about the odor," Tallarico said. Ned Ahrens/King County (Wash.)