



## Wastewater Questions and Answers

August, 2016

### **Overall Questions about the Wastewater Project**

#### ***1. Why do we need a wastewater system?***

The Councils of the Municipalities on the South Side of Pigeon Lake have been working on a wastewater system for many years. The project has been discussed in a variety of forums including Annual Information Meetings, newsletters, the website and Council meetings. A wastewater system will provide benefits in several aspects of our lives at the lake. They include Health and Safety, Environmental Protection, Convenience, and Social Impacts.

**Health and Safety-** A well-managed and watertight wastewater system will reduce exposure to toxic waste materials that are evident on private property when tanks are pumped and along roadways if there is leakage from the sewage trucks. It will also eliminate all septic fields. In addition, potential exposure of water wells to wastewater contamination will be significantly reduced.

**Environmental Protection** – This closed system will reduce run off and leakage of wastewater into Pigeon Lake, demonstrating our commitment as ratepayers and Councils to the health of the lake by taking the steps that we can to reduce nutrient build up.

**Convenience** – This system will provide the on-going disposal of wastewater at an approved treatment facility for many years to come. You will no longer need to worry about tank levels and company coming; measuring of tank levels to plan for a pump out when you will be at the property; waiting around for the truck to arrive; the tank needing to be pumped out on a Sunday or holiday when trucks may not be available.

**Social and Economic Impacts** – There will be no offensive odours to offend guests or neighbours when a pump out may be required on a hot summer day. Road maintenance and repair costs will be significantly reduced as Wastewater truck traffic becomes negligible.

#### ***2. What is the status of the Project?***

The system has been developed in two Phases. Phase I of the Regional system is completed and fully funded. This line runs from the lagoon at Mulhurst to the pumping station at Westerosé. During the period of March to June 2016, over 2.6 million gallons of sewage were pumped down this line.

Funding for the engineering design for Phase II of the Regional System has been approved and this work will begin shortly.

The Local Wastewater system projects are underway. Design engineering is nearing completion for the Summer Villages of Ma-Me-O Beach and Norris Beach and for neighbouring developments in the County of Wetaskiwin. Engineering is underway for Crystal Springs, Poplar Bay and Grandview.

The engineering firm has recommended a STEP – sewage treatment effluent pump –system be installed. This is a low pressure system that requires a two compartment, two access tank. Components include the municipal line along the roadway, curb stop valves and check valves between the road and the tanks, pumps with filters and pump casings (the biotube) in the second compartment of the tank and an electrical control panel for the pump unit.

### ***3. How does a low pressure STEP system work?***

Wastewater from your home goes into the first tank compartment. In that compartment, solid wastes are “digested” and a small amount of indigestible solids sink to the bottom as sludge. The liquid component then flows into the second chamber. The pump is installed in this chamber and the effluent is pumped through the low pressure line to the pump station.

### ***4. When will construction start?***

The project has been divided into two phases which align with the construction and completion of Phase I and II of the Regional line. The Summer Villages of Ma-Me-O Beach, Norris Beach and some areas within the County of Wetaskiwin are expected to begin construction later this fall. The Summer Village of Crystal Springs is scheduled for the spring of 2017. Poplar Bay and Grandview plan to construct the local line in 2017 and start residential hook up when Phase II of the Regional System is complete.

## **Questions about Regional and Local Line Construction Costs**

### ***5. Why can't we amortize the construction costs on our taxes over 30 years like they did on the north side of the lake?***

Council has deferred the use of grant funding from the Municipal Sustainability Initiative for this project and built up reserve funds to pay for the Regional and Local Lines. The Lines are completely funded through grants and reserves, unlike the system on the north side of the lake. There is no additional cost to lot owners for this portion of the system. As such, amortization of tax burdens will not be necessary. The Municipal Government Act does not allow for municipalities to finance those costs which are the responsibility of the property owner (such as landscaping or a new tank).

## **Questions about Hook-Up Costs**

### ***6. How much will it cost for me to hook-up?***

The estimated hook-up costs for lots that produce wastewater will range from about \$6,000 to as much as \$15,000 depending on items such as tank location and whether or not a new tank is required (refer to question #8 below). Additional surface costs associated with landscaping may increase individual costs. We will have a much better idea of actual costs (which we expect to be lower) once the Summer Villages of Ma-Me-O and Norris Beach begin their on-lot hook-ups.

There is an on lot self-assessment tool for estimating these costs available to you. Please contact the Summer Village Office at [information@svofficepl.com](mailto:information@svofficepl.com) to request a copy of the excel On Lot Cost Estimating Model.

### ***7. Will I have to get a new tank?***

If you have a compliant 2 compartment tank with 2 accesses at the surface (risers), your tank can be hooked to the system.

Competent single chamber tanks may need a pump vault or secondary tank installed in close proximity to the existing tank to provide the second chamber.

Tanks will be inspected prior to construction to determine if a new tank will be required. If you have a relatively new tank, it is likely to meet the requirements. However, many older tanks continue to remain in good condition and will also be acceptable.

***8. How will the hook-ups be managed? Will I need to find a contractor or will the Summer Village manage the contract?***

We are investigating various ways to work with the contractors who perform the on-lot service connections. The plan is to manage the process in a manner that will reduce overall costs resulting in both cost savings and greater convenience for homeowners.

**Questions About Operating & Maintenance Costs**

***9. Who pays for system maintenance?***

As with all utilities, the users of the utility are responsible for the operations and maintenance of the system. The Regional Line will be managed under a Commission comprised of representatives from each of the participating municipalities. The commission will ensure that costs are fairly allocated.

The Local Lines will be managed as a Municipal Utility. Each municipality will be responsible for the operating and maintenance costs for their lines.

***10. How much will the operating costs for the Regional and Local Lines be?***

The current estimate for Regional Line costs is about \$75 per year per lot. This includes the costs associated with the operation and maintenance of the lines, pump stations and lagoon; capital replacement costs, and administration.

Local Line operating costs are also expected to be low. They include costs associated with the operation, maintenance, capital replacement and administration of these lines and are expected to be less than \$75 per lot per year per wastewater producing lot.

Therefore, the total operating costs for the Local and Regional Line are currently estimated to be less than \$15 per month or about \$150 per year per lot.

***11. What do I have to do to maintain the equipment on my lot?***

The pump, valves and lines on your property are your responsibility the same as are your water well pump costs. The pumps should be inspected every couple of years to ensure that the filter remains clear and that the pump appears to be in good condition. Your Council is looking for ways to facilitate this process and find cost efficiencies.

***12. Do I still have to pump out my tank?***

The first stage of two compartment tanks on the STEP system will need to be pumped out occasionally. Our estimate is that the pump outs will be required in about 5-15 years depending on the volumes of wastewater and the types of materials allowed into the tank (refer to question #3).

**13. What about my direct on-lot costs?**

We are estimating that on-lot costs to homeowners will be approximately \$150 per year or \$12 per month including an allowance for amortization of the pump. This includes electrical costs (\$5 per year), pump/filter inspection every second year (\$60), pump out every ten years (\$15) and a pump replacement fund spread over 20 years (\$60).

**14. So what will my total annual cost be with the new system?**

The total cost for a wastewater producing lot including the Regional, Local, and on-lot costs is estimated at \$300 per year, or \$25 per month. Based on this, anyone who pumps out more than 2 times per year will be saving money by using the system.

**15. It looks like the County is managing the homeowner costs differently – why is that?**

The County of Wetaskiwin is working with each area under development as a local improvement levy and has processes in place for this type of construction project that they will be following.

**16. Do I have to hook up?**

In support of achieving all the benefits of a wastewater system as outlined in Question#1, the Provincial and Federal governments have invested in this region through the Water for Life Program, the Building Canada Grants, and Alberta Community Partnership Grants, to a total of approximately \$25 million dollars. In appreciation for this investment, most of the south side Summer Villages implemented Wastewater Bylaws that require hook-up to the system within a prescribed time frame. Poplar Bay's Wastewater Bylaw states that all wastewater producing lots must connect to the wastewater system within one year.

**17. I support the wastewater project but the hook-up costs are going to be a challenge for me. Can anything be done to assist residents with these costs?**

Significant cost savings can be achieved if residential tie-ins are completed at the time of local line construction. The Building Canada grants can be used to offset the cost of directional drilling to the holding tank. Qualified contractors will be on hand to install the pumps and complete all other aspects of the tie-in at a price that takes advantage of economies of scale.

In addition, we have looked at working with the bank to create a financing option for residents.

For those who may need to borrow to finance their on-lot hook-up costs, the payment for a \$10,000 loan over a 10 year period would be approx. \$100 per month.

For residents who qualify for Seniors Special Assistance, sewers and septic tanks qualify under that program. For more information see <http://www.seniors-housing.alberta.ca/documents/SNA-Information-Booklet.pdf>

Your Council is sensitive to the fact that the Alberta economy has had a negative impact on residents and will continue to look for opportunities to reduce costs.