

# No Choice: New Sewage Plant in the Works

This article follows an article in the June SLPOA newsletter. It's available for your perusal on our water district's website, slcwd.org: click on "new sewage plant info."

You have heard by now that the water district and DSPUD are working on a new sewage plant.

You no doubt have heard that it will cost a lot.

It will.

You've further guessed that it's the rate-payers who are going to pay for it through increased rates.

It's true.

"But it's already too expensive up here."  
"We pay way more for sewer and water than I do at home."  
"There must be another solution."  
"What's wrong with you guys!!!"

### We Have to Build a New Sewer Plant

There is no other solution. The old plant can't be fixed.

The current plant is not reliable and there are new State requirements making most of the plant obsolete.

The State has said we must solve the problems by 2014 or face steep fines . There is also the possibility that the State would shut down the system, prevent new building or prevent additions if we don't implement a solution.

In DSPUD and SLCWD we have undeveloped lots which cannot all be built upon because there is not enough capacity in the current plant. The new plant will be large enough to allow current undeveloped lots to be able to connect to the sewage system.

Tom Skjelstad, the DSPUD manager succinctly illustrates the issues as the "3 R's." We have to take care of the River, the Ratepayers and the State Regulations.

**Current customers will not be paying for the increased capacity.**  
Undeveloped lots will pay for their portion of upgrades to meet State requirements and for the increase in capacity to serve them.

### The Bullet Points

- Our 1980's plant is unreliable.
- The State demands a fix.
- The State has imposed new sewage disposal requirements.
- We have until 2014 to fix the problem.
- Only better technology can solve the problem.
- We have to have a new sewage plant.
- It will cost a lot.
- We must approve the plant.

## OR

- we can pay high fines
- we can risk shutdown.
- Undeveloped lots will pay for any increased capacity.
- The State does not take over failed plants and allow continued operation. So we can't just lay the problem off on them.

## The New Plant

The DSPUD and SLCWD joint committee has been planning the new plant and have decided upon a solution that will meet our needs, local problems (cold and uneven flows due to our 2nd home community) and be flexible.

### Joint Committee Recommendations:

The plant will be improved to even out the flows and deal with low temperatures. Sewage will come into tanks and be stored before being treated so that flow can be equalized.

Influent will be heated and treatment tanks will be insulated so the processing bacteria will be happy.

Those simple solutions will resolve inefficiencies but not new and future State requirements. Only a better technology can do that.

To meet new State regulations, treatment technology will be membrane bio-reactor. The resulting almost pure effluent will be treated with UV light to kill any remaining bacteria and remove emerging contaminants, before going into the river.

Environmental groups are supportive of the joint committee's decisions.

## We Have to Start Quickly

If the project can be started quickly we can benefit from a sour economy. Financing rates are at historic lows and sewage plants are "on sale" greatly discounting construction projects. For example, the SLCWD's recent work has been done for as much as a 30% discount over good times. If there are delays or protests to upgrading, the costs will only increase.

In a good economy the cost of the proposed plant will be a little over twenty million dollars. This will hopefully be financed through government programs with our rates making the loan payments.

If all goes well construction could begin in 2012 with completion in 2013 so we can beat the State's April, 2014 deadline.

Ratepayers will not be happy that we are going to have to pay for a new plant but this is something we have to do, the new MBR system will be much more reliable, changes in plant design will make it more efficient, and if we can get started soon, we can save money.

This is an important Summit community issue. We have to deal with it. To learn more visit the SLCWD and DSPUD websites. You can read more complete analyses and reports and you can see the plans.

Keep an eye on [www.slcwd.org/pages/SewagePlant.html](http://www.slcwd.org/pages/SewagePlant.html) for information and public meetings

**DEADLINE: 2014**

## Q's and A's

### Why is sewage treatment so expensive in the mountains?

see "The High Cost of Water Treatment at [www.slcwd.org/pages/SewagePlant.html](http://www.slcwd.org/pages/SewagePlant.html)

### Didn't we build the current plant with government grants?

**Just get some grants.**  
There are no grants.

### Why should we pay for capacity increase?

Only undeveloped lot owners will pay for increased capacity.

### Why can't we just conserve to solve the problem?

We can conserve the water we use. But that does not solve the sewage problem because waste concentrations will just be higher. Unless we eat less, there will be the same amount of waste; it will just be carried in less water.

### Why not use holding ponds and process the waste over time?

The new plant will even out the flows with storage tanks obviating the more expensive ponds, land acquisition and greater environmental requirements.

### Don't the ski areas constitute all the use?

They do use a lot of capacity but they also pay for that capacity. There will be a renegotiation of the DSPUD's Cal-Trans contract for processing rest area sewage. That doesn't affect the SLCWD side however. We pay for the capacity we use (it has been 44%).

### Won't this new plant just encourage more development?

There is currently not enough capacity to service undeveloped

# More bad news

On the SLCWD side we have to pay for our part of the new sewage plant. That will have to be paid for with increased rates. In addition the district has been working for the last three years to renew our infrastructure.

Our sewer mainline and laterals have begun to reach their expected service lives. Parts of the original sewage collection system were installed poorly resulting in failures. Rather than wait for a catastrophic failure the District has rebuilt parts of the system. We have run TV cameras through the lines to find leaks that have been fixed. Leaks in laterals have been repaired. Sagging lines have been replaced. We have substantially reduced I/I (inflow and infiltration) into the system. On the water side, leaking or inadequately sized water main lines and many water supply laterals have been repaired and fire hydrants have been upgraded to modern standards. Sunken manholes have been raised. Old equipment has been replaced. For a more complete discussion see the Fall 2010 SLPOA Newsletter (on line at [www.slpoa.com](http://www.slpoa.com)) and the projects page on the SLCWD website ([slcwg.org](http://slcwg.org)).

We have paid for fixes with bank loans. Now that we are done our interest only loans are done and we have to amortize them. Principal payments will have to be made. That will occasion a further rise in rates.

## How Much Will It Cost?

So How much are we talking about?

There are too many unknowns to have completely accurate accounting right now. The plant has not been designed beyond the general outlines. Interest rates are not fixed, etc.

Cost of plant: about 22 million dollars

Cost per ratepayer of developed lots \$8-11,000

Cost per undeveloped lot rate payer \$8-11,000

(slightly more for undeveloped lots because undeveloped lot owners are paying for the expansion of capacity to serve them.

Ratepayers will be able to pay the costs up front or they may pay over the term of the 30 year loan SLCWD will be obtaining. Amortizing the cost over 30 years and the yearly costs will be \$550-840.

## The Technology:

Membrane Bio-Reactor Technology

MBR is a more expensive process for treating sewage but there are advantages:

- more efficient than other processes
- leaves a purer end product.
- more easily handle incremental expansion so we do not have to immediately build a plant to accommodate all the current un-built lots.
- more easily handle the addition of ozone treatment for emerging contaminants.
- requires less end-stage disinfection.
- proven technology and will be more reliable than other processes.

## Q's & A's cont'd.

lots. Without the ability to hook up those lots are essentially worthless. Those owners have to be accommodated. The plant will be built only big enough for currently developed lots and existing undeveloped lots. We are not going to pay for any more capacity than we need.

### Why should undeveloped lot owners pay for the upgrades of the last three years?

Undeveloped lot owners will benefit from the upgrades made over the last three years. The upgrades fix flaws in the original installation, increase water flows to higher capacity hydrants, increase capacity for the system, reduce operation costs, and increase the life span of the system. Undeveloped lots helped pay for the original system's bonds; this is really the same thing. When they connect, it will be to a flaw free modern system.