

Coburg Wastewater Project

Frequently Asked Questions 2013



Coburg Wastewater Project Phase II and III (treatment facility & collection system) Groundbreaking November 2011 at the Treatment Facility Site

Did you know?

The City of Coburg is the second largest City in Oregon without a municipal wastewater system.

Coburg's system will be a STEP system which means solid waste remains on site in a tank and will be maintained by the City – like a garbage service - and the liquid or 'graywater' is treated at a treatment facility. The water will be so clean after treatment; it will be used for irrigation purposes.

1. What is the purpose of the Coburg Wastewater Project?

Answer: The purpose of the Coburg Wastewater Project is to construct a wastewater treatment facility and sewage collection system that meets all the regulatory requirements and can be constructed as efficiently and low cost as possible. The project responds to dangerous levels of pollutants (nitrates) that have been detected in the ground water serving as the City's drinking water and the alarming number of property owners that have very old tanks and/or unmaintained tanks. A municipal wastewater system also allows property owners more flexibility to develop their property as they choose (no more drainfields) and allows for a broader range of development types. More details of the City's Wastewater Project history can be found on the City's website: www.coburgoregon.org.

2. As a home or property owner, what costs can I expect as the project is constructed and operated?

Answer: Several grants and loans will help pay for the project. Homeowners and property owners will fund part of the cost of construction, operation, and maintenance of the treatment plant and collection system. During construction, the City will charge water users an interim or construction fee. This fee, of \$65 a month for each EDU is being used to pay City costs of the project, and to avoid much long term borrowing.





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3. As a homeowner or property owner, what costs can I expect as the project is constructed and operated?

Answer: Several grants and loans will help pay for the project. Homeowners and property owners will fund part of the cost of construction, operation, and maintenance of the treatment plant and collection system. During construction, the City will charge water users an interim or construction fee. This fee, of \$65 a month for each EDU, will be used to pay City costs of the project, and to avoid much long term borrowing. After hook-up, homeowners will pay \$85 per month. After the project is completed (around March 2014), a Local Improvement District (LID) assessment will be assessed for each property. It will be based on the final project cost and the square footage of each property. Payment of the LID may be paid over time if requested. See the *Cost Calculator* fact sheet.

5. What other components will be a part of the system, and who pays for electricity?

Answer: The septic tank will have a pump and pump control panel which will be installed at every tank. Control panels will be mounted on homeowners' exterior walls and will require connection to the electrical panel. The location of the control panel is flexible only to the extent allowed by electrical code requirements that will ultimately govern location. The homeowner will pay the electrical bill for pump operation. Typical electricity costs for pump operation will be between \$0.20 and \$0.30 per month.



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Above - Electrical box which will be connected to the house or placed on a pole.

6. What am I responsible for maintaining, and what is the City responsible for maintaining?

Answer: The City will be responsible for maintaining the system to the upstream of the septic tank where the building drain line connects to the tank. The maintenance of the tank, associated equipment, pump and pump control panel, and all other piping for making the connection to the collection system will be the City's responsibility. Maintenance of the drain line upstream of the tank and back to the building will be the responsibility of the homeowner. A maintenance easement on your property is what allows the City to come onto your property to maintain and service the tank and pump. Inspections should be expected every other year and pumping every four years. Any repairs will be completed as needed. **If your alarm sounds, call R & G at 503-580-7701.**





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7. What are you doing for limited and low income households?

Answer: The City has a limited income assistance program for both water and wastewater. It is reviewed and adjusted annually by City Council. It is a voluntary program where the participants shall apply each year between May and June. There is also a donation program. Anyone may make a donation to the limited income assistance fund. All donations go directly to offsetting utility bills to the lowest income residents. Further, there are a number of current costs to property owners for septic that the City will take responsibility for including pumping and maintaining the tanks. If a tank needs to be replaced, the City will pay for that as well. See the *Cost Calculator* fact sheet.

7. Who is the contractor and what are they responsible for?

Answer: R & G Excavating was the lowest qualified bidder for the 'hook-up' phase of the project. The City was legally bound to contract the work with them. R & G is responsible for their approach, schedule, and directing their crews where and when to work. They are responsible for their sub-contractors including Builders Electric who is installing the electrical and tank work. The electrical contractor is usually the first contact with the property owner. They install the electrical panel to the *outside* of the house and to your tank. R & G will install your tank, pump, and pipe. They are required to provide you a written 2-week notice before they start work. They are also required to provide you a 2-day notice. **Please take this opportunity to contact R & G and coordinate the placement of your tank.** If you do not contact them, they will



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assume that you have no questions and will complete the work per their schedule. Once the work is complete, adjustments are not made because it is very expensive to the Project to redo the work. (An exception would be if negligence was involved).

3. Will the Wastewater Project fix the groundwater contamination problem?

Answer: We do not know for certain how much the City's septic tanks have been contributing the pollution problem. There are two major sources of nitrates in the groundwater. One is from agriculture – from fertilizers and from farm animals. The second is human waste. Well tests upstream of the City show lower nitrate levels. Due to the number of tanks that have been replaced due to leakage thus far, it is reasonably likely that the Project will have a greater impact on environmental quality that originally estimated.

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