

COBURG'S WASTEWATER HISTORY

1977-2009

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Most of the history of sewer proposals in Coburg is found in city documents or city sponsored studies relating superficially to Coburg's wastewater issue and stored in the memories of those who have worked on the possibility of providing sewers in Coburg.

1977

The first documented discussion of sewers in Coburg began in 1977. A report concluded that for the next twenty years Coburg would be able to survive without a sewer system. The study also recommended a program for active monitoring of septic systems in Coburg.

1978

Coburg annexed the Coburg Industrial Park. An engineering analysis determined that septic systems for properties in the Industrial Park would not work because of the high ground water in the area. The engineers proposed a sewer treatment system for the industrial area estimated to cost \$300,000. Nothing was done concerning this proposal.

1990

Coburg commissioned a study of the cost of a municipal sewer system. The system would have cost approximately \$3.4 million. Since grant funding was restricted to not more than half the cost of the project, a city wide wastewater system was recommended. Also, the possibility of connecting to the MWMC regional facility was examined. This plan did not move forward.

1997

The wastewater system review was updated and listed two alternatives. The first listed alternative was a pressure collection system with a standard treatment system facility. This system was estimated to cost approximately \$8 million dollars. The O&M cost for this system was estimated to be \$50 per month. The second alternative, a gravity system, had projected lower O&M expense and would have cost approximately \$12 million. Grant support for the project was estimated at \$4 million. Nothing was done with this proposal.

1999

In 1999, the present Wastewater Facilities Plan was completed. The plan reviewed a range of wastewater alternatives. Included was a more comprehensive study of the option of connecting to MWMC. It was determined that connection to MWMC was not impossible, but there was no certainty that such arrangements could be made. MWMC indicated the cost of a connection would be somewhere in a range from slightly less than a local system to about \$3.5 million higher.

The 1999 Plan recommended a city wide system costing an estimated \$8.5 million. In seeking to put together a financing package, Coburg obtained initial indications of support in the amount of \$2.5 million on grants and \$6 million in loans. Concern over the cost kept forcing delays in implementation of the project.

2001

The City formed an Urban Renewal District with the intent of using the revenue to help defray the costs of a wastewater system.

Also in 2001, the planned discharge point to the Willamette had to be moved due to environment issues and piping around a wildlife/nature perseveration area. This raised the estimated cost of the system by several millions of dollars. The engineer recommended changing the discharge point to the McKenzie River. At the same time, the City decided to make a prolonged attempt to arrange to connect MWMC.

2004

In 2004 new DEQ regulations required an update to the facilities plan. The 1999 plan had been designed for a population of 1,020 in 2022. In 2004 Coburg's population was 990. Coburg was required to update its population projections.

The update also looked at all options for a system that might be approved by the DEQ, which was providing funding to the City and regulates all wastewater systems. WW treatment options as presented in United Front documents listed a natural lagoon system as the selected treatment option with outfall to the McKenzie River. The estimated cost of the system was \$9.6 million.

2005-Present

In 2005, the natural lagoon system treatment option was eliminated due to soil conditions. A sequencing batch reactor was the recommended alternative. The cost for Coburg to construct its own system increased to \$19.4 million.

The alternative to that system was connection to MWMC. Investigating the possibility of hooking up to MWMC took two years. After Coburg agreed to pay for the study, MWMC calculated the cost if Coburg were allowed to connect. MWMC determined the final cost for connection to MWMC was an initial payment of \$12 million. In addition, Coburg would be required to pay the cost of constructing a collection system in Coburg, pay the cost of the pipeline and pumps to connect across the McKenzie River and the cost of upgrading the Eugene system to handle the effluent. The estimated total cost of connecting to MWMC ranged from \$16.9-25.4 million. Shortly after receiving this estimate, the McKenzie River was declared a salmon rearing stream, which placed severe temperature and water quality standards on any discharge.

Coburg's facilities plans have always included a cost benefit analysis of all feasible systems. After access to the McKenzie River was restricted, the project had to be reengineered. City Councilors Nelson and Thiel had completed research on the STEP/ MBR System and suggested that it be considered. DEQ also encouraged the city to pursue the STEP/MBR treatment option.

The Council in December of 2007 unanimously authorized staff to proceed with planning the STEP system with discharge to Muddy Creek as it was the least expensive system that meets our State mandated discharge requirements.

The original estimated cost in 2007 of the basic STEP system (tanks, collection system and treatment) was \$15.9 million while connecting to MWMC cost range was \$19.9 -22.4 million. The current (2009) estimated cost of the STEP system is \$25 million. The increase is due to a variety of factors such as inflation, engineering, increased contingencies, outflow issues, projected city staffing for the wastewater operation, and city hall project oversight and management.