

Pine River Times, 1/9/2012. Bayfield wants to fix infiltration problems at water plant

Town board authorizes engineering report

By Carole McWilliams  
Times senior staff writer

Groundwater infiltration is enough of a threat to permitted capacity at Bayfield's new sewage treatment plant that town officials want to do a big fix this year.

On Jan. 3, town trustees authorized Town Manager Chris La May to take the initial step to seek a \$500,000 Colorado Water and Power Authority loan to fix infiltration.

They authorized up to \$18,000 for a preliminary engineering report (PER) that is required before applying for the loan. The next loan application deadline is March 15, creating a Feb. 1 deadline to submit the engineering report, La May said.

The town inherited various issues, including infiltration and penalties for previous permit violations, when it took over the sewer system in 2008 from the Bayfield Sanitation District, a separate, government entity that is now defunct.

The town's \$7 million sewage treatment plant started operation in Sept. 2009. Its permit capacity is 600,000 gallons of sewage per day.

Because of infiltration, the plant is approaching 80 percent of permit capacity, especially in summer. That's the point when the town has to start planning to expand the plant.

The town's 2012 budget has \$50,000 designated in the sewer fund for infiltration repairs.

La May said the cost of the report will come out of that initially. If the town gets the loan, the study cost will come off the top of that.

He feels the town has a good chance to get the loan.

That would be a 20-year term to repay the loan at \$33,000 a year, he said. "Hopefully after this is done, we won't be needing \$50,000 a year to fix infiltration. We are thinking it could be cost-effective to get it fixed all at once instead of some every year."

Trustee Gabe Candelaria commented, "I think over 20 years, we're looking at a lot more than \$500,000 in repairs; \$500,000 isn't a whole lot when you start digging up streets."

The plan is to slip-line the parts of the collection system that have old clay pipe, La May said. "Yes, if we have to tear up streets and replace lines, \$500,000 will go quick," he said.

Mayor Rick Smith said the goal is to keep the sewer plant safely below its daily capacity limit, to avoid having to expand the plant.

Last year the town bought a camera designed to locate damage inside sewer lines.

Public Works Director Ron Saba said, "We got a lot of video last summer. All the PVC line is fine. We are marking out sections of clay, how many taps, how many feet. Without the PER, we can't do anything. The worry I have is we knocked out a lot of infiltration last summer, but it finds another way and comes back up. There's no way we can dig it all up and replace it. It has to be slip-lined."

Saba continued, "We spent a lot of staff time last summer. About three of us have been dealing with this. It has to be done. If we hit 80 percent of capacity this summer, which I bet we will, we'll be in trouble. If someone wants to come build something and asks about sewer taps, we'll have to tell them no."

Candelaria suggested submitting the preliminary engineering report to the USDA as well, as a possible alternative for a loan.

Trustees unanimously authorized La May to contract with the town's engineering firm to do the preliminary engineering report, with a cost limit of \$18,000.