

## **SUMMARY**

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The purpose of Olympia's Wastewater Utility is to protect public and environmental health by ensuring that wastewater is collected and conveyed to treatment and disposal facilities with minimal risk. Within Olympia and its urban growth area, the wastewater system consists of nearly 200 miles of gravity pipes, 27 pump stations and 1,500 STEP systems owned and maintained by the City; 4,000 privately owned and maintained onsite sewage systems; and regional collection and treatment facilities owned by the LOTT Alliance.

The way this wastewater system is planned and managed has a major impact on the City's ability to accomplish its land use, environmental, economic development and growth management goals. Olympia's Wastewater Management Plan has been developed in response to the challenges facing the Utility in managing this system:

- Past development has resulted in a leapfrog pattern of sewer lines, leaving many neighborhoods without sewer service.
- Rapid current and projected growth challenges the City's ability to plan systematically for future infrastructure expansion.
- Meeting the needs of future development must be balanced with the need to maintain existing infrastructure. While most existing sewer pipes and pumps can meet capacity needs for many years, about half of the infrastructure is past its design life or susceptible to corrosion. Given the need to protect public health, repair and replacement of failing sewer systems typically cannot be deferred until convenient.
- STEP systems installed in the last decade to serve new development have left the City with major ongoing maintenance responsibilities and a long-term liability.
- Many onsite sewage systems, especially in older parts of the City, are beyond or approaching their design life, presenting the potential for widespread failure and risk to public and environmental health.
- Onsite sewage system policies and regulations leave the City and County with overlapping or ambiguous authority.
- Construction costs are high and increasingly beyond the City's current capacity to support. Private costs of converting an onsite system or connecting a new residence are also high.

This Plan takes a proactive approach to planning and managing the future development of the wastewater system. In the long term (20 – 50 years), the City aims to:

1. Maximize the gravity sewer system as efficiently as possible (i.e., using a minimum number of pump stations). The City and its growth area will ultimately be served entirely by a City-owned gravity sewer system that is designed to prevent leakage and overflows and to provide sufficient capacity for projected demand.
2. Replace STEP systems in Olympia and its growth area through extension of gravity sewers where feasible. The current number of STEP systems will decline over time.
3. Replace onsite sewage systems in Olympia and its growth area through extension of gravity sewers. The number of onsite sewage systems will decline over time.

Implementation of this Plan over the next six years will be focused on specific actions that further these long-term goals. The Plan:

- Allocates two-thirds of capital expenses to repair and replacement of existing infrastructure.
- Allocates the remaining one-third to discretionary projects. These include extending a sewer mainline on South Bay Road, and providing sewer service along 18th Avenue and Yelm Highway as these roadways are reconstructed.
- Initiates a publicly funded program to extend sewers in developed neighborhoods to allow conversion of onsite sewage systems.
- Prohibits new onsite sewage systems within the City and requires/encourages the conversion of existing systems, with financial assistance.
- Increases the City's management of existing onsite systems to ensure proper functioning, in cooperation with Thurston County.
- Allows the use of grinder pump systems as an alternative to onsite treatment.
- Confirms the 2005 decision that no new STEP systems would be allowed in the service area.

The major financial implications of the Plan are:

- Increases the average annual CFP funding from approximately \$2 million to \$4.5 million. The financial consultant has proposed bonding of approximately \$15 million.
- Allocates additional operating funds each year to provide for improved program management and increase capability to complete system repairs with City crews.
- Increases monthly sewer rates over the next three years, increases general facilities charges (GFCs), and adds a rate surcharge to STEP customers to cover higher maintenance costs.

This Plan is available online at

<http://www.olympiawa.gov/cityutilities/wastewater/plan>.

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