

Tri-Lakes Joint Use Committee, Sept. 11

Pilot plant could be delayed to save costs

By Jim Kendrick

On Sept. 11, the Tri-Lakes Wastewater Treatment Facility Joint Use Committee (JUC) discussed the possibility of delaying operations of its total phosphorus removal pilot plant for a second year.

The meeting began with a minute of silence in remembrance of the victims and first responders who died or were injured on 9-11-2001.

The Tri-Lakes facility operates as a separate public utility and is jointly owned, in equal one-third shares, by Monument Sanitation District, Palmer Lake Sanitation District, and Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District. The three-member JUC acts as the board of the facility and consists of one director from each of the three owner districts' boards:

- President Jim Whitelaw, Woodmoor
- Vice President Dale Smith, Palmer Lake
- Secretary/Treasurer Chuck Robinove, Monument

Typically, several other district board members, including the JUC alternate representatives and district managers from each of the three owner districts also attend JUC meetings to ensure continuity of facility operations and in-depth knowledge on the district boards.

Further delay of phosphorus pilot plant suggested

Facility Manager Bill Burks said that in the second draft of the facility's 2013 budget, he had added a separate line item for the total phosphorus removal pilot plant that will be operated three months. That will finalize the design requirements for the full-scale removal plant that will be required for the next discharge permit.

Burks then suggested postponing operations of the total phosphorus removal pilot plant for a second year to save about \$50,000 in construction and operating costs, including chemicals, because there is no technical uncertainty regarding the design of the plant. He said this \$50,000 could then be reallocated to having engineering firm Tetra Tech perform a long-term capital improvement plan in 2013. The total draft budget amount of \$932,271 remained unchanged.

The purpose of the engineering design study is to start to resolve long-term uncertainties regarding other permit issues such as the biotic ligand model for determining an appropriate copper standard for the upper segment of Monument and a more detailed aquatic life characterization for this sandy-bottom stream segment. The Tri-Lakes plant will have difficulty meeting the current copper limits in the facility's discharge permit after the copper temporary modification expires.

The current naturally occurring multimetric index scores for aquatic life in Monument Creek just above the Tri-Lakes effluent discharge pipe are only about half of the minimum score required by Regulation 31.17, hence unobtainable. This will require a perpetual discharger specific variance for the Tri-Lakes facility and, as of now, paying consultants to prove once again every three years that the stream segment will never meet the state minimum aquatic life standard.

Woodmoor District Manager Jessie Shaffer noted that the total phosphorus removal upgrade would not be required for another five years on the next facility discharge permit, and there would be an accelerated compliance schedule that would allow a little more time for

design and construction. It is likely that the actual permit requirement may be changed by then due to changes in plant or effluent characteristics.

Shaffer said he too preferred investing in master planning in the short term to determine options and costs regarding efficiency upgrade alternatives, additional blowers for increased aeration, sludge drying beds, land requirements for plant expansion, and emerging new nitrogen treatment processes and technologies.

The JUC asked Burks to specify, at the Oct. 9 meeting, the actual costs for a Tetra Tech master plan study as an alternative to completing the total phosphorus pilot plant project in 2013. The JUC representatives will also report back to Burks on a final decision regarding whether their districts want to proceed with the proposed new \$87,000 storage building in 2013. The new building has been deferred the past two years because of the unexpectedly high costs for the Monument Sanitation District to participate in the stakeholder process for creation of the new Control Regulation 85 and Regulation 31.17 and the high cost of the district's Wakonda Hills collection system construction.

Burks noted that the final two payments to Liquid Waste Management Inc. for 2012 sludge removal, \$32,072 and \$32,418, had been made. The actual amount of sludge removed was 346 dry tons versus the planned amount of 350 dry tons. The total cost for the year was \$126,709, which was \$116 under budget.

In the plant manager's report, Burks noted that there had been one slightly elevated E. coli measurement due to some failed ultraviolet lamps that led briefly to less disinfection than expected. All other aspects of plant operation were normal.

More Water Quality Forum groups formed

Jim Kendrick, Operations, Monument Sanitation District, gave a brief overview of the new stakeholder work group meetings that have been formed to resolve issues in publishing new policy and guidance documents for implementation of Control Regulation 85 limits by June 30, 2013, and statewide nutrient monitoring by March.

The number of Water Quality Forum work groups has jumped from six to 13 because of the regulatory workload created by these new regulations. Fees for wastewater service throughout the state will have to rise immediately and dramatically to cover the costs of the additional workload, equipment design and construction, operations, and maintenance to remove more nutrients from wastewater as well as to remove more metals and organic compounds.

The new interim limits for nutrients in Regulation 31.17 are technologically and economically unattainable, Kendrick said. The EPA's demands on nitrogen and metals removal are even more restrictive. The EPA's new demands for arsenic removal are also technologically and economically unattainable, he said.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

The next JUC meeting will be held at 10 a.m. on Oct. 9 at the Tri-Lakes facility's conference room, 16510 Mitchell Ave. Meetings are normally held on the second Tuesday of the month. Information: 481-4053.

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