

DSPUD Frequently Asked Questions

TOPIC: Proposed Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements

DATE: June 11, 2010

Q: Why does the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) need improvements?

The DSPUD Wastewater Treatment Plant, like all plants in California, is regulated by the California Regional Water Control Board and by the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). New permits are issued every five years and they usually place more stringent regulations on the plant. DSPUD's new permit (effective April 2014) specifies strict requirements for ammonia and nitrate levels that may be discharged into the Yuba River (among other requirements such as pH, residual chlorine, turbidity, temperature, nitrogen, and copper). The current wastewater treatment plant cannot treat the wastewater to the level specified in the permit and therefore, it must be substantially upgraded to meet these new permit requirements. See the new permit and comments here:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/tentative_orders/0904/index.shtml#20

Q: Where does the WWTP discharge?

The DSPUD Wastewater Treatment Plant discharges to the South Yuba River. DSPUD discharges by way of spray irrigation to the ski slope of Soda Springs Ski Area during summer and early autumn when weather and soil conditions allow.

Q: What type of treatment will the wastewater go through after the plant improvements?

The proposed changes to the plant will include a higher level of treatment called "tertiary" treatment with Membrane Bioreactors (MBR). The use of MBR allows the existing plant to be reconfigured so that it will more efficiently and effectively remove ammonia and nitrate. Additional influent flow equalization storage is proposed to help deal with flow surges. There will be processes and facilities placed to control temperature so that the biological treatment is more effective. There will be changes to the effluent disinfection as well as other changes. At this point, all changes are merely recommendations subject to detailed review, public comment, environmental review and other analyses. The best way to learn about the proposed new treatment and upgrades is to read the proposed Facilities Plan and/or attend information meetings scheduled for June 21 and July 10 at 10:00 a.m. at Judah Lodge in the Sugar Bowl Ski Area.

Q: How does the Yuba River benefit from to the plant improvements?

The proposed improvements to the plant will result in a higher level of treated effluent than is currently discharged into the Yuba River by DSPUD and bring the plant into compliance with the new permit. The permit is issued by the California Regional Quality Control Board which establishes permit requirements so that the health of the water body is maintained. This is the same goal as DSPUD: protect the Yuba River.

Q. An unsightly algal bloom occurred in 2008 at the District's discharge point, will the improvements prevent such events from happening in the future?

DSPUD is absolutely committed to making sure that the effluent does not contribute to algal blooms or have any other deleterious impact on the Yuba River. The proposed improvements to the plant will produce a higher level of treated effluent and bring the plant into compliance with its permit, which should prevent future algal blooms. However, algal blooms are the result of many factors including ambient temperature, sunlight, river temperature, nutrients and others. We can control the nitrates we contribute the river but we cannot control temperature, sunlight and other nutrients that might flow into the river from other sources. DSPUD will continue its monitoring of the river during periods when all of these factors are present so that if other blooms occur, we will know if the excess nitrates came from the plant. All sample results (taken from above and below its discharge point) are available at www.DSPUD.com.

Q: What are the environmental impacts of the plant improvements?

There should be minimal impacts to the environment because the plant improvements will take place on the existing plant location with no measurable increase in "footprint". The full environmental impact report will not begin until the final alternatives have been selected. This plant is subject to NEPA/CEQA, which allows for extensive public review and comments and requires that we fully investigate all potential environmental impacts.

Q. I own an unimproved property, does the Facilities Plan include expansion of the treatment plant?

The project will include additional capacity for unimproved property owners within the District. The cost of the expansion portion of the project, and a percentage of the improvement portion, will be borne by those property owners requesting capacity for future building.

Q: How can I make comments about the plan?

We welcome comments at any time. Those received via email to comments@dspud.com or by mail to the DSPUD office will be considered "formal" comments and will be made available to the public through periodic updates on the DSPUD website (www.DSPUD.com). The formal NEPA/CEQA process will also include public hearings where we must track all comments and also make those available to the public. We welcome phone calls and will do our best to answer questions at any time. We have scheduled two meetings for this summer.

Q: Where can I get a copy of the plan?

Go to the documents page on www.DSPUD.com and look for the section on Joint Wastewater Facilities Committee.

Q: How much will my sewer rate go up? When?

We do not have that information yet. We will know more once a project is adopted. A decision might be made at the July 10 Joint Board meeting however, other factors might delay that decision.

Q: When will construction begin?

We do not have that information yet. We will know more in late summer 2010.

Q: Will the roads be closed or damaged during construction?

It is unlikely that there will be any major impact to the roadway during construction however, that is one element that must be fully vetted during the environmental review.

Q: Will there be any negative effects on the environment by construction?

It is unlikely that there will be any major impact to the environment during construction however, that must be fully vetted during the environmental review.

Q: What is the CEQA process?

CEQA is the California Environmental Quality Act. It is designed to raise all environmental issues related to a project, allow public comment and require groups to mitigate concerns. Learn more about CEQA at: <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/puc/energy/environment/infocrit.htm> or <http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/>.

Q: Is this project affected by NEPA?

NEPA is the National Environmental Policy Act. Since some of the plant is on federal lands, there are NEPA requirements we must address. Most of this will be included in the NEPA/CEQA process. Learn more about NEPA at: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/nepa/>.

Q: I would like to talk with someone about this project.

Call the DSPUD office at 530-426-3456 or email us at comments@dspud.com. We might refer you to the engineering firm on the project, ECO:LOGIC Engineering depending on the amount and detail of information you require.

Q: When are meetings scheduled?

The first two meetings are scheduled for June 21 and July 10. More meetings will be announced on our website and in community calendars, in area newspapers, on radio sites and community sites, and via mail to our rate payers.

Joint Wastewater Facilities Committee Meeting
Monday, June 21, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.
Judah Lodge, Sugar Bowl

Joint Board Meeting (DSPUD & Sierra Lakes County Water District)
Saturday, July 10, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.
Judah Lodge, Sugar Bowl

Q: I cannot get to a meeting. How can I participate and submit my opinions or questions?

Send your comments to DSPUD via email to comments@dspud.com or by mail to the DSPUD office. All comments received this way will be considered “formal” comments and will be made available to the public through periodic updates on the DSPUD website (www.DSPUD.com). If you just want to talk to someone, please call us at 530-426-3456. We will do our best to answer your questions.

6/11/10