

Summary of Public Comments and Questions from August 12, 2008 PMAC Meeting for Pescadero Treatment Plant

The following summarizes public comments (C) made and questions (Q) asked by the public.

Responses by County staff or the project consulting firm (Hydroscience), represented by Curtis Lam (CL), are noted. In addition, some key points made at the meeting are noted as well.

County staff represented at the meeting were Jim Porter (JP), Brian Lee (BL), Joe Lo Coco (JL), Ed Garcia (EG), Dean Peterson (DP) (Environmental Health) and Matt Jacobs (MJ) (Supervisor Gordon's office).

Hydroscience is recommending a gravity system with two lift stations.

Q Why is the system not contiguous?

CL – Boundaries are consistent with CSA 11 boundaries.

Catherine Perry, PMAC - Boundaries can change but the mechanism for change would be difficult.

Q What is build-out based on?

CL – Local Coastal Plan

CL – Treatment plant based on an initial capacity of 25,000 gpd with ability to expand to accommodate ultimate build-out of 75,000 gpd.

Q Do all systems require removal of solids?

CL – Yes

Q Was biological treatment considered?

CL – This option was considered but did not make the final cut because tertiary treatment would still be required in all cases. Biological treatment beyond what is proposed would therefore simply add cost to the project.

Q Can treated effluent be used for irrigation?

CL – Yes

Q What happens during flood stage?

CL - Plant will have emergency storage to hold approximately 1 day worth of flow and will be located outside of the flood plane.

Q Will there be an odor?

CL – Not anticipated because of the oxygen exposure in the treatment process.

Q It is not unlikely that Pescadero would be out of power for 1 to 5 days. How will this affect the system?

JP – The system would be able to function continuously because it would be powered during an outage by diesel generators.

Q How would the generators be sized?

JP – Design question but system would ultimately be sized to allow for uninterrupted operation. Sizing would simply dictate refueling frequency.

Q Cost. How would this be paid for?

JP – Could be a property tax assessment as part of a benefit assessment district in combination with the currently identified grant funds.

Q Could individual property owners opt out?

JP – No, if community votes affirmatively for the assessment (50% +1), then those not in favor would not have the option of opting out.

Q What are the consequences if nothing is done?

JP – Leach fields can ultimately fail.

CL – The preferred site needs to be identified so that the project can move forward. Hydrosience and County are currently tracking potential outside funding sources.

Q Does cost per household include retrofitting the existing system?

CL – Old line would be cutoff and no retrofit would be necessary.

JP – Cost of abandoning the existing septic system is not included.

Q Will permit be req'd for discharge into Butano Creek? Can Butano Creek handle the flows?

CL – Yes, it needs permits. Flows can easily be handled by Butano Creek.

Q Will people with undeveloped parcels have to pay up front cost and annual O&M?

CL – Undeveloped parcels would have to pay up front cost but not O&M. O&M costs would kick in after the parcel is developed.

C Recommendation to include proposed project in IRWMP too, so that the proposed project could qualify for water bond funding programs.

JP – Noted

C Would like for the community benefits to be identified.

CL – Benefit would be long-term reduction of pollutants into the surrounding soils

Q Is it an option to incinerate sewage?

CL – Yes, but in bulk, for solid sludge, would not be cost effective

Q What about individually?

DP – Can be done for individual households. Involves buildup of compost piles and then incineration. This methodology has generally been used in remote regions. It is not an effective way of dealing with small community sewage. It works best in hot climates.

Q Which sites would be most economical?

CL – Corp Yard site due to reduction in energy costs.

JP – The additional pipe costs associated with the Yard site could counterbalance the energy cost savings.

Q What about the possibility of displacing the Corp Yard for siting the treatment plant?

JL – Could be wetlands and landfill issues.

JP – Would have to do an economic analysis to determine if this could have any cost benefits. This analysis would have to take into consideration the cost of a relocated Corp Yard facility.

Q Does the plant require water?

CL – Only for the purpose of meeting the operator's needs (i.e.... restroom facility)

Q If this were to go forward, what would be the time frame?

CL – 6 to 9 months for design. Up to approximately 3 years for completion of construction.

JP- Environmental permitting could further delay a project.

C Undeveloped parcels take 3-7 years to develop, based on the current approval processes.

Undeveloped parcels owners will likely not support the project.

Q When do the Small Community Grant Funds expire?

CL – Believes that the grant lasts for 5 years (would need to confirm)

Q Why not pursue other funding opportunities in the meantime?

BL – Important to note that the funds are not secured and are first come first served. Thus, you run the risk of losing this funding if you wait in hopes of finding additional funding sources.

JP – We can also evaluate other grant opportunities in the meantime.

Q Can the project be sized down to affordable components? i.e....separate funds for various project phases such as design, permitting etc...

JP – Phasing construction would likely result in increased overall costs. Can explore whether there are opportunities to separately fund individual project phases prior to construction. The County will also contact our congressional representatives to inquire whether there are any federal programs that could be tapped into.

Q Can County participate in the project cost?

JP – The County's policy is to not use General Fund sources to pay for utility type projects that can and should be funded by user charges. In addition, the County has a structural budget deficit and does not have General Fund money available for the project.

Q Can County land be provided to the community at no cost to the community?

JP – Possible, but there are certain legal requirements that the County must comply with.

Q Do costs go down when community buildout occurs?

JP - Some savings to O&M, as other parcels buy in.

Q Can this project be considered as a green credit to expedite the development permit approval process?

JP – Possibly. Would need to discuss with the Planning and Building Department and report back.

Q How does the process of determining whether there is community support work?

JP – In terms of an assessment district, County staff would hold several meetings with community representatives to work through details of the project and costs. The process should take between 6 and 12 months.

Q Does County have data re: pollutants in Butano and Pescadero Creeks?

DP – Environmental Health data is from standing water subsequent to flooding events measuring coliform levels. Environmental Health does not have creek pollutant data.

Q Would like additional detail re: the assessment process?

JP – Costs to be finalized through an Engineer's report. (Described assessment district process). Once ballots, with costs to individual property owners are sent out, property owners have 45 days to cast their votes.

A public hearing is required when votes are counted.

Q Do cost estimates take into account potential litigation costs?

JP – No. The law relating to assessment districts is well defined. While suits can be filed on most anything, a lawsuit regarding the validity of an assessment district is typically based on the creation of the district being in accordance with established law and the basis for assessments as outlined in the Engineer's Report.

Q Are there avenues for additional funding if the high school were to be included in the project?

JP – Such an expansion to the project would likely simply result in additional project cost, and the school would not be required to pay in. Not aware of additional funding opportunities that would result from the high school's inclusion in the project.

Q Are constructed wetlands an option?

CL – Constructed wetlands are a poor way of treating effluent. Two communities currently have cease and desist order relating to such wetlands.

Q PMAC member question to the community – if no cost to the community, could the community support?

Some community members indicated support while some community members indicated that solving flooding problem has a higher priority than building sewer system.

County Responses to PMAC Letter Dated August 15, 2008

Following are the questions and comments (in bold) taken directly from your letter dated August 15, 2008, with responses by County staff (County) or the project consulting firm (Hydroscience), represented by Curtis Lam (CL), noted.

1) Community Outreach

PMAC: Community outreach on the concept phase was left to the end of the process.

County: The County informed PMAC of the working draft once adequate information was compiled within the report to provide the community with a comprehensive picture of the proposed sewer system. Community outreach could not have been done earlier, because there simply was not adequate information available for the community to review.

PMAC: The concept study went through major revision by county staff without community involvement.

County: County wanted to ensure that the report was factually correct. Inaccurate information will only mislead the community.

PMAC: County staff has not taken ownership for community outreach.

County: The Department of Public Works should not influence the community one way or the other. The Department's role is to provide information regarding the project, and allow the community to ultimately decide if they want the sewer system. As such, the Department has participated in community outreach by sending out notices to the affected property owners, performing presentations, and by being present to answer questions.

PMAC: Public involvement to date has been one presentation to the PMAC earlier this year and the town meeting in Pescadero on August 12. From the community standpoint, public involvement in the concept phase has just started near the end of the concept phase.

County: The presentation by HydroScience Engineers, Inc. in December 2007 described the components of what is being proposed in the report. PMAC allotted one hour for presentation and questions and answers before the draft report was prepared. Once HydroScience reached substantial completion of the working draft, the County was better prepared to inform the community of the proposed sewer system. The community's input has been valuable in proceeding with the preparation of the draft report.

2) Flooding and Power Outages

PMAC: Pescadero has long duration power outages during winter storms. Outages of 1 to 5 days can be expected during sever storm events. How will any system handle this?

HydroScience: The system will be designed with standby generators that will power the lift stations and treatment plant should power go out. These generators will be diesel powered, and diesel fuel will be brought in as needed to refuel the generators.

PMAC: Portions of the system will be underwater while the power is out.

HydroScience: The lift stations should not experience a problem being underwater. The treatment plant will likely never be underwater.

PMAC: How long will the system run before the household toilets stop running in a power outage.

HydroScience: During a power outage, the toilets and all sewage would continue to flow by gravity to the sewer system during a power outage.

3) Discharge Permit Ongoing Cost

PMAC: Does the estimate for ongoing operating expenses include the expense of maintaining the surface discharge permit?

HydroScience: Yes. The operator would be responsible for that paperwork.

4) Sludge Removal

PMAC: 600 gallons per day of sludge that is 1% solids 99% water will need to be trucked over the hill to a disposal facility? This is about 70 tons per month. Is the cost of the sludge hauling included in the estimates of operating cost?

HydroScience: Yes.

PMAC: Is the cost of sludge disposal included in the estimates of operating cost?

HydroScience: Yes – Hauling and disposal are the same cost – the hauler would charge to take the sewage, and they would dispose of it in a way that complies with all

regulations. We speculated that EBMUD would be a logical place to dispose of this waste.

5) The system as proposed has three disposal methods.

PMAC: The main discharge method is surface discharge

Leach lines spray fields are secondary methods

Can the system be constructed with only a surface discharge?

HydroScience: It can, but it is not advisable. Any wastewater treatment system should have multiple methods of disposal in case of emergency, in case one disposal method is unavailable for any reason (pipe break, non-compliant effluent, etc.).

6) Old airport site

PMAC: The preferred site for leach lines (if required) is the old airstrip located on the county land. Before this site is used the use of this airstrip for emergency purposes should be considered. After a major earthquake event the Coastside will be isolated.

HydroScience: Comment noted.

County: The leach fields will be below ground. The surface will still be available for use, including emergency purposes.

7) The County is in the process of capping the Pescadero landfill with a clay cap.

PMAC: Has this work been coordinated with the site selection for the waste water treatment plant?

County: Yes. The preferred location of the treatment plant is outside of the old landfill cell to not disturb the closure activities and on-going post-closure maintenance.

8) Stage Road sewer elevation

PMAC: Some of the residential units along western side of Stage Road in Pescadero are located well below road elevation by 5 to 8 feet. Can a gravity sewer accommodate these units?

HydroScience: The gravity sewer would simply need to be located at a deeper elevation. During the design phase, the necessary elevations would be surveyed for the purposes of design. If there are elevation issues that are specific to selected

parcels but not common to the town, it is possible that the gravity sewer would be designed to meet those concerns and a system for these parcels to pump their sewage into a gravity sewer would be designed.

9) Constructed wetlands

PMAC: The community has expressed interest in a constructed wetlands type of treatment option. This option has not been specifically addressed in the concept phase proposal. The concern is that if left off the proposal phase it cannot be added later. This type of system may be less expensive to operate and have significantly lower energy use.

One system that has been proposed for concept review is Individual STEP type of tanks that handle solids and pump liquid to a treatment plant. During a power outage the tanks will collect sewage until full. Sealed pipe leading to the treatment system carries liquid from septic system.

Constructed wetland treatment consisting of clay lined ponds with vegetation.

The county is adding a clay cap to the landfill.

Can this work be combined?

HydroScience: Most of the costs for operations & maintenance (O&M) will be for labor and collection system maintenance. These would be common to any treatment system. A wetlands system would have lower power costs, but it is not expected to be permitted for surface water discharge by the RWQCB. Not having a surface water discharge means that more leach fields would be needed, increasing that cost. Plus, there would be only one method for disposal, when two are preferred. If this is something the community wants to evaluate, we will.

I am not aware of how combining the landfill clay cap work with the sewer project would benefit either project. They are separate technical issues.

With the landfill and the adjacent wetlands at that site, that site is expected to have more significant environmental impacts than the other sites.

County: The purpose of capping the old landfill with clay materials is to minimize water entering the disposal materials. Constructing wetlands for the sewage disposal on top of the capped landfill will defeat the purpose and likely will not be allowed by State regulatory agencies.

10) Constructed Wetlands

PMAC: The concept of a constructed wetlands type of water treatment system should be addressed in the Hydrosience in the body of the report. This concept has been discussed since 2002 in Pescadero.

A brief answer to these questions would help answer the community interest in this type of system.

Is this type of system technically feasible?

HydroScience: Yes, but constructed wetlands would need to be used in combination with other treatment processes such as primary clarifiers, activated sludge systems, or tertiary filters. Typically, constructed wetlands are not a component of the treatment step, but of the disposal step. If we wanted to create constructed wetlands as part of the surface water disposal, that would be a great benefit of that treatment. Constructed wetlands in and of themselves as the sole method of treatment would not comply with current RWQCB requirements for a wastewater treatment process.

PMAC: Does this type of system have lower energy usage.

HydroScience: Most likely, though the energy demand for the other required facilities would also have to be factored in.

PMAC: Can a system incorporating constructed wetlands

HydroScience: See above.

11) Fire Suppression

PMAC: Was Pescadero's need for an improved fire suppression system taken into consideration when preparing the proposal?

HydroScience: No. The study does not prevent this use, but it did not develop a plan for this use of recycled water.

PMAC: Can any of the work for the two projects be combined?

HydroScience: It is possible that recycled water can be used for fire suppression. It would require a tank, diesel powered fire pump station, and a recycled water main extending through to the areas where fire hydrants would be located. If the County wants to evaluate this, we can do so.

County: If the Community is interested to pursue construction of both systems, there could be some administrative cost saving. They will still be required to be in separate trenches with different elevations and will only affect the business area. The disruption to the

community will be minimized. On the other hand, the demand for funds from the community (especially to the businesses and others who need fire suppression) will be higher to cover the cost of both systems at the same time.

12) User Cost

PMAC: Regarding the accounting, it looks like the initial subscribers to the system pay startup costs that later subscribers don't pay. Has this been fairly addressed?

HydroScience: If a currently undeveloped parcel develops after the wastewater system has started up, they will have to pay a similar or greater connection fee in the future. They will be paying for their share of the treatment and collection system capacity, as well as the cost to add infrastructure in the future.

County: If an assessment district is formed, property owners who have undeveloped parcels within the boundary of the district would be assessed for the construction of the sewer system. However, since they have no structure that would be discharging waste, they will not be responsible for paying for the systems annual operation and maintenance.

13) CSA 11 Boundaries

PMAC: Are we sure we shouldn't be anticipating an expanded CSA-11? Were the boundaries redrawn how would this affect proposed system cost, could the added members bring down the EDU's? Has this system been designed so that expansion of CSA-11 could be accommodated in the future?

HydroScience: Parcels outside of the CSA-11 service area are largely agricultural and more rural in nature. It is not likely that expanding CSA-11 would reduce the cost per EDU. If there was a specific proposal to expand the CSA-11 that is feasible, we will evaluate the cost and technical impacts.

The system as currently planned allows for future expansion of flows to 75,000 gpd average daily flow. Though the location where the sewage would originate from is unknown, it was assumed to come from the identified areas near the collection system based on the Coastal Development Plan.

County: The County does not anticipate an expansion of CSA-11 in the foreseeable future. The existing water source will not have an adequate supply for an expanded CSA-11. The Coastal Development Permit for the CSA-11 water system restricts water usage to within the current boundaries only.

14) Concern about mandate and motives

PMAC: The town meeting was 3 or 4 years ago, and was only about 20 people from town, and 60 or 80 "Stakeholders" from places other than Pescadero. At the time, everyone present was allowed to vote, which in my opinion skewed the results, because so many "Stakeholders" were allowed to vote, thereby "Corrupting the vote". What we got was what the "Stakeholders wanted Pescadero to look like. In my opinion, if you want to find out what people in Pescadero want, you need to count only the votes from Pescadero residents and property owners, and the formula should be "one property = one vote". Further, I would listen to what renter/residents wanted, but give the vote to people who actually own property, in the affected area. I would thank "Stakeholder for their opinion", and then let only property owners from the affected area vote.

Mid Pen used the same tactic, in building "The coastal advisory committee". They started with the premise of " Getting the opinion of the people on the coast", and then filled the seats with Mid Pen Board members, and sympathizers" so that any vote was corrupted by Mid Pen Influence.

County: Comment noted.

15) Flooding

PMAC: We were told last night, that flooding causes the septic systems in Pescadero to overflow, and release effluent. A major concern last night was worrying about a sewer system, but dodging the same old problem, "When are we going to do something about the flooding", Eliminating the flooding in Pescadero would cut back on the septic problems in a big way.

County: Comment noted.

16) Flooding

PMAC: Rich Gordon promised years ago, to take the lead in bringing together the people to solve the flooding problem. The last we heard, we needed to do one more study, before we could do anything about the flooding. Where is that study at in terms of completion, and when can we expect Rich Gordon and the experts to help us do something about the flooding?

County: Comment noted and has been referred to Supervisor Gordon's office.