# Moose Lake-Windemere Area Sanitary Sewer District

[www.mlwssd.org](http://www.mlwssd.org)

NEWSLETTER

 May 2015

Message from the Sewer District

 Sprig, has finally arrived!! As much as I enjoyed a fun winter of ice fishing, I must say I am glad spring is here. I have a few things I would like to report on behalf of the Sewer District. The District currently has a contract with the City of Moose Lake for treating the wastewater at the City of Moose Lake’s treatment ponds, however, it was brought to the District’s attention in early 2014 that the ponds are getting close to capacity and extensions may be limited. With that being said, and with the help of State Representative Mike Sundin, the District has held a series of meetings over last summer/fall to discuss the future of our area and sewer system. All affected City/Townships were notified of the meetings and encouraged to attend.

The District is currently seeking funding from the Clean Water Legacy Fund for conducting a 20 year facility study/comprehensive plan which would look at regional wastewater treatment for the cities of Moose Lake (including MN DOC and MSOP Facilities), Sturgeon Lake (including Willow River CIP Facility), Kettle River, Willow River and Barnum. Lake areas to be looked at in the study include Moose Lake Sanitary Sewer District, Sturgeon Lake, Island Lake and Barnum Township (including the Hanging Horn Lake Area). The study covers all of these areas but doesn’t necessarily mean all the areas will be sewered. The purpose of the study is to look at a larger regional area to determine where sewer may be needed due to failing systems, water quality etc. and to ensure it is sized appropriately to meet those needs in the future.

 The goal of the study is to maintain or improve the quality of the regional waterways by providing a long term comprehensive plan to ensure that the best available and most economical wastewater treatment is being utilized in the study area. The District has already spent approximately $87,000 in reviewing collection and treatment for unsewered areas **within** the current district boundaries and these reports will be updated and incorporated into the proposed study. At this time the District is seeking $185,000 funding from the legislature to complete the study to include the outlying areas outside of the District. Hearings have been held at the capitol with Representative Jason Rarick introducing the bill on the house side and Senator Tony Lourey on the senate side. The District will know more on the status of the bills in the near future.

As always, if you should have any questions regarding what is happening in the Sewer District, please do not hesitate to give us a call at 218-485-8276. Have a great summer!

Darla Hall, Executive Director

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Office Hours Mon., Tues., Wed. 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

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Don’t Rush to Flush, Take it to the Box



Safe Medication Disposal Program

 The official advice on how to dispose of unwanted prescription or over-the-counter medications has changed. The traditional advice has been to dispose of them by flushing down the toilet or drain. Although this method prevents accidental consumption, it can cause pollution in the wastewater. Numerous studies have found the presence of medication or their byproducts in surface water, which can cause adverse effects to fish and other aquatic wildlife. When the water is eventually reused as drinking water, it can also cause unintentional human exposure to chemicals in medication. DON’T FLUSH, instead TAKE IT TO THE BOX:

Drop off boxes are located in the lobbies of:

**Carlton County Sheriff’s Office**

(218) 384-3236 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**City of Cloquet Police Department**

(218) 879-1247 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon-Friday

**City of Moose Lake Police Department**

(218) 485-8404 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon – Friday

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* Leave medication in original container
* Remove your personal information but leave the name of the medication
* Securely tape the lid on the medication
* Drop the medication into the disposal box
* **NO Needles, Syringes or Thermometers. Household Medication only, No Businesses.**

**Keep Our Waters**

**Phosphorus Free**

A pound of phosphorus can generate 100 pounds of algae in Minnesota lakes. Limiting phosphorus leaking into our surface waters limits algae growth in lakes. That’s a nice save for Minnesota’s water future. For more easy tips to save water in Minnesota, visit: [www.mrwa.com](http://www.mrwa.com)

* Phosphorus is the primary nutrient polluting Minnesota surface waters.
* Purchase lawn fertilizers and laundry detergents that are free of phosphorus.
* On-site septic systems are also a source of phosphorus pollution; use only low phosphorous-free detergents and soaps in the home.
* Ask your local carwash to use only low or phosphorus free detergents.
* Keep your food garbage out of the water. Food waste is high in phosphorus content, especially potato peels and meats.

**NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS**

**I would like to issue a clarification on the last billing you received. In accordance with the District Ordinance, no person shall discharge or cause to be discharged any unpolluted waters such as storm water, groundwater, roof runoff, subsurface drainage, unpolluted industrial process water, or cooling water into the District Sewerage Systems by means of a sump pump or otherwise.**

Tip for Buying a Home: If you are buying a home with a septic system, do not overlook the status of the septic system!!!  The codes have changed dramatically over the last decade rendering more than half of all systems technically illegal.  Up to this point most regulatory agencies have been content to ignore these old systems.  However as the environmental damage from these old noncompliant systems becomes evident, some states states/counties are starting to require the systems be brought up to current codes before the property can be sold.  However this is not a perfect process and what is starting to happen more frequently is people are told by the health depts. ***after*** they buy the home and move in that the system needs to be replaced and they as the new owners will be held responsible...an unforeseen cost that few can afford.

More and more realtors are now beginning to realize it is their responsibility to represent BOTH the buyers and the sellers when it comes to the septic system.  An educated agent will strongly suggest the sellers have the system inspected for code compliancy and upgraded if necessary before deciding on a selling price and factor those costs into the final selling price before listing the property.  When representing a buyer they will again suggest a full compliance inspection be done before making an offer and if the system comes up short factor those costs to upgrade/replace the system into the counter offer.

If you are shopping on your own and find a house you are serious about, hire your own independent ***septic*** contractor to perform a full compliance inspection.  I stress septic contractors and compliance inspection because most home inspectors inspect homes, not septic systems and a good home inspector will tell you that.  And even many contractors when asked to inspect a septic system will often assume you just want to know if it is failing or slow.  Often those inspections are nothing more than flushing a dye down the toilet, running some water down the drain and look in the yard for surface discharge that only tells you if the system is having problems, not what is in the ground.  Believe it or not there are many septic systems that are nothing more than pipe out to a cesspool (illegal for years in most of the country), a ditch or a lake or a stream.  Grandfathered in...fuggedaboudit.  Even some government agencies don't realize it but you cannot grandfather in a health or environmental issue.  If that were the case you could still smoke in airplanes, restaurants and public buildings, as long as you smoked before those policies kicked in.  Industry could still dump their toxic waste anywhere they wanted as long as they were doing it before the environmental protection laws were passed.  Unfortunately once you buy the house the problem is yours and there have been cases where the people have been kicked out of their home weeks after moving in because the failed system is an immanent health risk to the public.

A full compliance inspection should include:

* Tank pumped and inspected for cracks/crumbling concrete, missing/inadequate baffles, excessive drain back from the drainfield (indicating a failing system).
* Size of tank.
* Size and depth of drainfield.
* Depth of seasonal water tables should be determined and the amount of separation from the trench/bed bottom to the water table.
* Perk rate of the soil and if the [size of] the drainfield will handle the daily flows from the house (usually 150 gallons per bedroom per day. A 3 bedroom home should have a drainfield that will handle up to 450 gallons per day).
* Any non-complying parts of the system should be noted. Any future code changes that would put the system in non-compliance should be reported. Example: Even if the system meets code requirements today, the system should be assessed if it will meet any proposed changes in the septic code requirements in the near future (and a good septic contractor will be aware of pending changes).
* Dollar estimates for any suggested up-grades should be provided.
* This inspection assessment should be provided to the sellers and buyers in writing and these costs should be incorporated into the selling price.

This inspection will cost $200-$600 but it is worth every penny if you find any problems. Any up-grades can/should be negotiated into the selling price of the home. If no problems are found then you know you are starting with a good system and it is up to you to take care [of the system] from the beginning. Buying a home is the biggest investment most will ever make...that septic inspection is part of your due diligence.  If the seller refuses an inspection you should take this as a sign of potential problems and walk away or plan $ accordingly (if you are getting a good buy on the property and you really like it, then paying for these upgrades out of your own pocket would be worth it).

Tip for selling a home: Before you list the home, have the system inspected to see if it meets current code, if not have the system upgraded and factor those costs into the selling price and use that new system as a selling point.  Warning: do not try slipping a noncompliant system past the buyers...many sellers are getting sued by the buyers when they learn you sold them a house with a pre-existing problem.

Tip for building a home: If you are having a house built, make sure the contractor that designs and installs your system is a certified professional (most developers go with the cheapest subcontractors they can find...insist they use a qualified septic contractor). If you are your own general (hiring the subs) try to find a contractor that does both septic and foundations to do all of your "dirt" work.  Also have them out to the lot to to design the system first and build the house according to the septic...in some cases moving the house 10 feet in one direction or eliminating that basement bathroom can make a difference between a $5,000 system and a $15,000 system.

Also don’t make the mistake of hiring someone because they are the cheapest. Go with the contractor with the best track record. Many people have saved a few bucks on the first installation only to have the system fail 1, 2, 3 years later and by that time the original contractor is out of business or refuses to correct the problem. Now the second system can be even more expensive because the yard is landscaped and the choices for a replacement are narrowed down.  *Information supplied by Jim von-Meier, Septic Protector, Environmental Educator, Zimmerman, MN.*

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| Moose Lake – Windemere Sanitary Sewer District304 ½ Elm Avenue PO Box 588Moose Lake, MN 55767 |  | Third ClassUS PostagePaidMoose Lake, MN 55767Permit No. #73 |
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