



# Summary of Public Comments

## from Wastewater Facilities Planning

### January 2001 Public Meetings

#### Question and Answer Session – Large Group

- Q: What is the status of the County's Comprehensive Plan?  
A: December hearings were cancelled pending review of several issues, including whether the proposed schedule for sewer extensions meets Growth Management Act requirements. The County is exploring options for accelerating the sewer extension program.
- Q: Will the County be addressing non-point sources of water pollution in the Facility Plan?  
A: It is true that up to 70% of water pollution in the County comes from so-called "non-point" sources, such as runoff from streets and agricultural areas. These are being addressed through other programs; the Wastewater Facility Plan addresses point sources only, i.e., sources that flow through the County's piped sewer system.
- Q: Isn't there a December 2001 deadline for addressing stormwater according to NPDES requirements?  
A: There is an effort underway to model the levels of dissolved oxygen (DO) in the Spokane River that partially addresses this issue. Waste load allocations for point sources vs. non-point sources may be established for the river by means of what is known as a TMDL process ("total maximum daily loads").
- Q: What is the status of the septic tank conversion program?  
A: The sewer extension program was discussed at the public meetings via staff presentations and maps of the system. It is an important element of the County's efforts to protect the quality of our aquifer, which provides our drinking water. The County Commissioners are currently considering limited exceptions to the mandatory hook-up program within the Urban Growth Area Boundary. These possible exceptions would only be allowed in cases where hook-up costs would present a hardship and where ultimate hook-up to the County sewer system is scheduled to occur within six (?) years.
- Q: Is there evidence that septic tanks have any effect on the aquifer?  
A: Yes. Comparing groundwater quality data from before and after septic tanks have been eliminated provides evidence that the program protects the quality of the aquifer.
- Q: What is the County's role in eliminating CSOs?  
A: Some of the older areas in the City of Spokane have combined sewers, which carry both stormwater and wastewater. These combined sewers sometimes overflow during storms. These overflows, called combined sewer overflows or CSOs, are an issue for the City of Spokane, which is why the City has a CSO elimination program in place. The issue affects the County since the County sends wastewater to the City's sewer pipes, upstream of the CSO overflow points, and then to the City's regional wastewater plant.

- Q: If the County sites a plant on the Little Spokane River, what level of treatment would be required?  
A: Ultimately the treatment level for any new plant will be determined and approved by the state Department of Ecology. The wastewater at a new plant will be highly treated; the river would remain swimmable. A plant on the Little Spokane River would also have the potential advantage of augmenting low flows during the summer.
- Q: Has the County identified a location for a new plant yet?  
A: No, no specific locations for a new wastewater treatment plant have been identified at this point on either the Spokane River or Little Spokane River.
- Q: What does a wastewater treatment plant look like?  
A: The extent of aesthetics incorporated into the design of a treatment plant is up to the local community. A plant can be designed to be compatible with commercial, industrial, or neighborhoods with appropriate investments in property, design features, and consideration of aesthetic elements. Examples of treatment plant sites developed as parks and designed to blend with industrial settings were discussed.
- Q: How is a new plant paid for? Will the decision be put to a vote?  
A: The decisions on a preferred plan, and ultimately on plant location, will be made by the County Commissioners. There are various options for financing a new plant, but in general the ratepayers pay for the system as part of their monthly utility bill.
- Q: Is it better to have one large treatment plant or several smaller ones?  
A: Consolidating the region's treatment processes in a large plant may offer some opportunities for cost savings, but the river may be able to accommodate the effluent discharges and meet water quality standards better if the system uses several smaller plants.

**Meeting Questionnaire Responses** (20 questionnaires returned, 10 of the 20 were mailed in after the meetings, all respondents did not answer all of the questions)

### **Demand Management Questions - Fact Sheet #1**

1. Do you feel that public education efforts on water conservation are adequate? Rather than requiring more specific mandatory requirements to reduce water consumption and wastewater flows.

Yes = 8                      No = 9                      Unsure = 2

**Comments: For the majority of the population water is metered in order to provide lower cost potable water, to reduce costs individuals reduce consumption, mainly by implementing water conservation techniques; The public will not get involved until higher rates are proposed, they do not see any urgency and have chosen not to engage in the process; Water conservation only delays treatment needs; I believe education will be the biggest factor to convince Spokane County residents that this project is so beneficial to them; Public education inadequate on water use, should be used as much as possible to replace regulations; Spokane residents are not well informed on water conservation, they are spoiled and assume they need not worry, we need more laws and rules to preserve our environment; I feel you have made a good attempt to educate the people; No, people do not understand how large of an effect they can have by using water conservation; Public education and awareness programs should be increased and continued, in addition, incentives to conserve should be implemented, primarily through cost/usage ratio of consumption; Yes, better**

**education efforts and incentives are more acceptable alternatives; Unsure, I watch Channel 7 a lot and would probably watch informative presentations on water conservation rather than read about it in the newspaper, presently don't have much information about it.**

2. Do you think that low flow fixtures should be provided at no cost to individual homeowners for them to install at their own cost to replace traditional higher flow fixtures?

Yes = 6                      No = 12                      Unsure = 2

**Comments: It will save in the long run; Huge burden! Every problem that may occur will be your fault; They should be made available for individual homeowners who request them, they should not be distributed to all homeowners as many will not use them and there is not way to enforce their use; Perhaps low or shared cost would be more appropriate; Yes, but with some options to decline the offer; They should understand that they save money when they use less water (add a brick); No, providing fixtures does not install them, this would only waste money that would cost all taxpayers; These kinds of programs are received favorably by the public, similar to the something for nothing approach, grant funds should be sought to fund such a program; No, retrofitting homes with low flow fixtures should be accomplished at the homeowner's expense, lower water and sewer bills should be incentive enough; Unsure, it would be nice to help low income people with the transition; No, individuals should take responsibility to do their part to help conserve water, most people could afford to do this on their own.**

3. Should the County expand efforts to strictly enforce disconnection of basement sump pumps from the sewer system?

Yes = 7                      No = 9                      Unsure = 2

**Comments: A majority of the sump pump issues deal with businesses located within a shallow non potable aquifer, this aquifer becomes contaminated easily, therefor treating potentially contaminated water is a good practice to keep contamination from entering the potable aquifer; No, how would the County enforce?; Yes, only if there is a viable place to pump waterhouses should be built in places where sump pumps are not needed!; Where groundwater problems exist how are homeowners to protect their property; Educate; Does this mean that a basement could not have a bathroom or does this only apply to drain water; The County must develop an infrastructure to convey such wastewater and develop ordinances that would put "eth" into failure to comply; No, this would be a waste of effort in our area, the ground drains so well that very few basements even have sump pumps; Unsure, is that a real problem; Unsure, what kind of sump pumps, do they pump to septic tanks?; No, I don't see this an a problem since flooded basements are such a rare occurrence in this area.**

4. Do you feel sewer rate surcharges on industries and businesses that contribute high-strength wastewater are appropriate?

Yes = 18                      No = 0                      Unsure = 1

**Comments: Only if additional treatment techniques are required to treat the high strength wastewater; Yes, proportionate to their use; Absolutely, if it was more expensive they would be pro-active in reducing high strength wastewater; Concept should be that user pays. The general public should not be responsible to subsidize the cost of treating industries high strength wastewater; Yes, the industries and businesses that produce the high strength waste should pay the full cost of treatment; Yes, or they should take measures to reduce their high strength wastewater.**

5. How do you think the County could best increase water recycling and reuse at industry and commercial enterprises?

Comments: **Education; Could credit for recycling and reuse; By raising sewage treatment rates; Not sure; Make it available and decrease rates if reuse is implemented; Tax incentive breaks if they install facilities that recycle water for coolers and heaters; Provide information and resources for assistance; Pro-active actions to prevent contamination, enforcement, control nonpoint source pollution; new laws to restrict pollution; set examples of good pollution prevention practices; In view of the idiots who are going to require minimum flow in rivers we should dump all the water in the river that we can; It needs to be required prior to water hookup to get done; Permit limitations on the strength and contaminant levels of industrial and commercial wastewater; Through development of regulations and ordinances and the ability to levy fines and penalties for failure of industry to recycle and reuse on site (incentive programs are great but the best disincentive is the financial threat); Through pretreatment programs and education particularly if a cost-benefit is achievable; Unsure; Provide incentives to make them reuse their water; By charging or increase charges to compensate.**

6. Additional comments and/or suggestions on Wastewater Demand Management (attach additional page if needed):

Comments: **Face up to the problem of “not in my backyard” by disclosing sites for waste water facilities early in the planning stage.**

## **Effluent End Use Questions- Fact Sheet #2**

1. Which of the proposed alternatives do you prefer and/or support? Check all that apply.

Surface Discharge and Streamflow Augmentation = **10**  
Irrigation of Urban Greenspaces = **15**  
Irrigation of Agricultural Land = **10**  
Industrial Reuse = **13**  
Wetlands Creation or Enhancement = **12**  
Groundwater Recharge = **5**

Comments: **Good investment for future use of farmlands; Surface discharge, irrigation of urban green spaces, and wetlands creation are all good and should be used in combination depending on plant location; All of the above acceptable, don't just talk about it, do it; Use all of the above unless uneconomical; I do not favor groundwater recharge as an alternative method of disposing of effluent; Wetlands creation/enhancement and groundwater recharge have too many unknowns for wide spread use over the aquifer.**

2. Would you support irrigation of golf courses, parks and other green spaces with treated effluent if these properties were located over the aquifer?

Yes = **15**                      No = **3**                      Unsure = **2**

Comments: **Yes, if it proved cost effective for both parties; Yes, it works and is being done all across the U.S., learn and educate; Yes, adequate controls and quality assurance is a requirement; Yes, evaporation and uptake by the plants could play an important role in reducing water use from the aquifer and disposing of the wastewater effluent; Yes, if they are not over the aquifer; Yes, as long as it would not negatively affect anything.**

3. In terms of dollars per gallon, the cost of supplying treated effluent to agricultural lands will likely exceed the current market rate for agricultural irrigation water, which may be the upper limit that farmers would be willing to pay for the water. Should treated effluent be supplied to agricultural lands if Spokane County ratepayers must subsidize the cost of the supply?

Yes = 6                      No = 6                      Unsure = 8

Comments: **The federal government is already subsidizing them with tax dollars; Must examine other reuse options and their associated costs, if other reuse options are significantly higher cost to ratepayers, I would support this option; Yes, it has to in a correct realm of cost; Yes, depending on a cost/benefit analysis, this is an expensive solution; Yes, I don't think this would be a problem as most true agricultural lands are located off the aquifer and do not have access to irrigation water, they are farmed as "dry land" and yields would significantly increase with irrigation; Unsure, depends on the cost analysis of the alternatives; Unsure, like to see analysis.**

4. If the opportunity were available and affordable, should the County supply treated effluent for industrial reuse?

Yes = 20                      No = 0                      Unsure = 0

Comments: **All options should be examined and implemented as appropriate.**

5. Do you support use of wastewater effluent to create wetlands over the aquifer?

Yes = 13                      No = 5                      Unsure = 2

Comments: **How far from production wells (drinking water)?; Bacteria degradation is high in surface waters; Only if existing wetlands could be used, not new ones being created; Yes, to the extent that quality is assured and potential runoff is monitored to assure there is no increase in pollution of streams and rivers; No, there are too many unknowns; No, but would prefer this over a direct groundwater recharge.**

6. Do you support the concept of groundwater recharge with highly treated effluent?

Yes = 6                      No = 10                      Unsure = 4

Comments: **How far from production wells (drinking water)?; Yes, it is proven technology, though thought is not pretty, but it is effective; Safety is my main concern; Only if other alternatives can't be used; No, the Spokane area has had a sustained aquifer protection education awareness program for many years, citizens will not accept a solution such as this that is contrary to the idea of aquifer protection; No, this aquifer does not lend itself to this type of activity; Not good.**

7. Would you be willing to pay \$5 to \$10 more per month to implement effluent end use measures that increase beneficial reuse?

Yes = 19                      No = 3                      Unsure = 2

Comments: **Yes, but not over the aquifer; Depending on the end use; Yes, depending on how beneficial the reuse will be, I would want to see substantial benefits (\$5 to \$10 is a substantial amount); Yes, Spokane County citizens have a history of supporting conservation and protection measures through self-taxation, it is my opinion that citizens would self-tax in order to fund a wastewater management program.**

8. Additional comments and/or suggestions on Effluent End Use (attach additional page if needed):

Comments: **There is a benefit in reintroducing treated water into rivers, particularly in summer months; We need to help and encourage major users to be more active in water conservation, consider credits for water recycling, closed circuit water systems, electro coagulation systems, effective oil/water separators, prestrainers.**

### Wastewater Treatment Plant Configuration Questions Fact Sheet #3

1. Which of the proposed alternatives do you prefer/support? Check all that apply.

Alternative #1 - All Flow to Spokane Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant (SAWTP)

= 2

Alternative #2 - Combination of SAWTP, New In-City Plant, and New North Spokane Plant

= 2

Alternative #3 - Combination of SAWTP, New Mid-Valley Plant, and New North Spokane Plant = 14

Alternative #4 - Combination of SAWTP, Multiple Mid-Valley Plants, and New North Spokane Plant

= 7

Alternative #5 - No Action

= 1

**Comments: Could support #3 if drinking water impacts could be avoided (with river recharging aquifer this seems uncertain); Support #3, City is out of the loop, piping is not as extensive, spread out flow and discharge to provide for alternative measures; If the County plans to be urban in nature, with its population, should work to independently handle its sewage; Support Alternatives 3 and 4 without New North Spokane plant; More plants might make reuse options more viable; Not enough information yet to identify options to support; Support #3 if this is the most cost effective; Politics notwithstanding, existing resources should be maximized with the County building its own wastewater treatment plants; Try to avoid plants in the City of Spokane.**

2. Do you think the County should work with the City of Spokane to establish a new interlocal agreement that will allow the County to send its wastewater to the City treatment plant, even though it will only satisfy the County's needs until 2020.

Yes = 9

No = 10

Unsure = 1

**Comments: Unproductive, costly, and avoiding the inevitable; Yes, this should be part of the solution, however, it should only be done as an interim solution and only as long as it is economically beneficial to the County; The agreement is necessary and required for all alternatives that increase flow to SAWTP over 10 mgd; Yes, as one of several different things to do at the same time; We should part from the City as soon as possible; Maximize existing resources.**

3. Do you support the siting of a new treatment plant along the Little Spokane River to serve the North Spokane sewer service area and provide stream flow augmentation?

Yes = 12

No = 5

Unsure = 3

**Comments: Yes, but only with extensive working with residents and Friends of the Little Spokane River; Yes, substantial growth in north Spokane County warrants a localized siting; Unsure, try to avoid dumping in rivers; No, prefer not to put it back into river.**

4. Do you think the County should try and enter into a new interlocal agreement with the City to build a new plant in the south-central part of the City to help resolve part of the Combined Sewer Overflow bottlenecks?

Yes = 5

No = 11

Unsure = 4

**Comments: No, City problem, County has no involvement; Should always explore regional solutions that would be most beneficial to all citizens of the County; Unsure, should be evaluated; This is a less desirable option, but should be included in a cost/benefit analysis when determining**

**feasibility; Yes, the County could even do more to resolve the CSO issue and help replace the sewer pipes and storm drains; No, like to stay independent of the City; No, keep the City out of it.**

5. Do you think the County should build a new mid-Valley plant, that is owned and operated by the County, to handle all or part of the wastewater generated in the Spokane Valley?

Yes = **16**                      No = **0**                      Unsure = **4**

Comments: **Unsure, should be evaluated; Yes, this is the best plan; Absolutely; Yes, County residents are going to have to pay for expanding the existing plant or building a new one, the SAWTP can only be expanded so much, establishing another plant MidValley should be done now.**

6. Do you think multiple mid-Valley plants, owned and operated by the County, should be built if more of the treated effluent can be reused through irrigation and industrial operations?

Yes = **10**                      No = **5**                      Unsure = **5**

Comments: **How far from wells?; Too costly and difficult to maintain; Unsure, should be evaluated; Yes, but question feasibility; Yes, if this is more cost effective; This is a big "if", markets should be identified with long term commitments for reuse before this option is seriously considered; Unsure, this would only work if there truly are enough irrigation and industrial operations to make an impact on the total flow; Unsure, would like to see cost analysis.**

7. Please score each of the following criteria to assist the planning team make decisions on wastewater treatment alternatives, with 5 being highly important and 1 being minimal importance.

Overall cost: **median = 4, average = 3.7**

Independence from the City of Spokane: **median = 2, average = 2.8**

Regional solutions that benefit both City and County: **median = 5, average = 4.1**

Minimizing number of treatment plants: **median = 3, average = 3**

Recharging the Little Spokane River: **median = 3, average = 2.6**

Maximizing effluent reuse: **median = 4, average = 3.6**

Other

8. Additional comments and/or suggestions on Wastewater Treatment Plant Configuration.

Comments: **Who is really making decisions, County or City, and who has the final say; I would be most in favor of the plan which reuses as much water as possible; I feel we shouldn't put effluent back into the river, even if we use it to irrigate during the summer and then put into river during winter.**

## **Biosolids Management Questions- Fact Sheet #4**

1. Which of the proposed alternatives do you prefer and/or support? Check all that apply.

Class B Treatment and Land Application = **10**

Class A Treatment and Land Application = **11**

Composting = **11**

Treatment at City of Spokane Facility = **7**

Co-Incineration with Solid Waste = **2**

Privatized Management = **2**

Comments: **Class B since it is proven and beneficial to all parties; I have no problem with Class B use, but the public most likely won't buy into it; Not enough information yet; Unsure on privatized management, complications of government/contractor arrangement is not the best solution; Need to turn it into bio-energy for power; Bio-power plant for electricity.**

2. Would you be willing to pay an additional \$2 to \$6 per month in sewer fees to have Class A biosolids produced?

Yes = 9                      No = 7                      Unsure = 4

Comments: **Yes, reuse opportunity is increased by higher quality biosolids; Yes particularly if it means continued land application.**

3. Do you have any preferences about land applications sites?

Yes = 9                      No = 7                      Unsure = 4

Comments: **Preferably farm land; Areas where children will not be playing; No, all options for reuse should be examined, quality of the biosolids produced is key; Yes, I think the agricultural lands west of Spokane are ideal; Yes, not over the aquifer; Yes, prefer that it is not over the aquifer; Yes, but not over aquifer; Yes, I would like to know the proposals and able to vote or have some kind of input in the decision making.**

4. Would you be interested in using composted biosolids in home gardening projects?

Yes = 9                      No = 10                      Unsure = 1

Comments: **No, many composts available for less money; Yes, however, I don't see this as a viable option, I don't believe the demand is high enough locally; No, we already have animal fertilizer from our animals.**

5. What are your views on incinerating the biosolids?

Comments: **Don't want it in the air; Not in favor; Not in favor due to air emissions and energy prices; As long as air quality standards are still able to be met; Seems expensive with limited returns; Air quality must not be degraded; Can current plant handle the expected influx of solids or would additional capacity at the incinerator be needed? Clean air versus clean water? A toss up, both vital; Waste of resources; Why incinerate a viable product; No; Only if it compares economically with other measures; Incinerating biosolids is not the best use of the resource, although it may be the cheapest; It is a waste of energy and causes more problems with air quality than it is worth; Can it be an energy plant, what kinds of air pollutants and smells are created; Would it create energy?; I like this idea, but haven't read enough on it; They shouldn't be incinerated, they should be recycled.**

6. Do you have any preferences as to whether the County, the City, or a private contractor manages biosolids?

Yes = 11                      No = 6                      Unsure = 3

Comments: **I want the County to manage it if it is in the County; Use private contractor that is more responsible for their actions; Yes, County or City; Concerns about private contractors and their reliability; Seems whatever approach used for building plants will determine how biosolids will be dealt with from the County; No, should be regional; Why not form a City/County coop and work and invest as a team; Private enterprises in many cases operates much more efficiently than government; More information is needed in order to make an informed opinion; Unsurprisingly probably; Yes, private contractor as long as they know what they are doing; Yes, private should help on costs; Yes, the County.**

7. Additional comments and/or suggestions on Biosolids Management (attach additional page if needed):

Comments: **No comments offered.**

## 2000 Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan Questions Fact Sheet #5

1. Do you think that the County should accelerate the Septic Tank Elimination Program from the current completion date of 2012 to a completion date of 2008?

Yes = 9                      No = 9                      Unsure = 2

Comments: **No, the citizens are not demanding it and they complain about traffic problems due to construction; Also curb any new developments without sewer or their own sewer system; No, I do not think that septic tanks are harmful, I do not know of any real science that shows that they are; No, diminishing returns will negatively affect ability to fully fund an accelerated construction program; No, I think there is currently too much disruption of traffic and increasing the size of projects rather than having more projects would be more efficient; No, should think about traffic issues; No, I need all the additional time I can get to save up the money to pay for this.**

2. Do you believe the County should provide “up front” financing for the construction of sewers outside of the Septic Tank Elimination Program area, and within the Urban Growth Area Boundary, with reimbursements from future developments and associated new connections? If yes, do you think the County should construct only the major trunks?

Yes = 9                      No = 10                      Unsure = 1

Comments: **Yes, need them done right; Only major trunks; Put them in as needed, wait for anti growth attitude to change; Yes, major trunks; Unsure, need data on costs and impacts to comment; Only major trunks; Yes, the County should construct major trunks only with developers being responsible for side sewers and connections; No, use LIDs, late comers agreements and pay for over sizing of lines (let growth pay for growth).**

3. Should the County use sales tax and other local revenue to subsidize/fund construction of sewers outside of the Septic Tank Elimination Program area, primarily for new development?

Yes = 4                      No = 14                      Unsure = 2

Comments: **Unsure, if the funding can be readily off set then yes, if speculative and a slow rush investment then no.**

4. Should new development pay the full cost for sewers and wastewater treatment?

Yes = 14                      No = 5                      Unsure = 1

Comments: **Yes, but they should not be allowed to put it in themselves; No, only to the main trunks; No, but a significant share; Yes, if Meadow Wood did it in Liberty Lake why can't others; Yes, except for the trunks which the County should install.**

5. The **Aquifer Protection Area Fee** was established by the voters of this area in 1985 and has been instrumental in lowering sewer construction costs to customers. It will “sunset” in 2006 and will require another vote to reauthorize its existence. Do you support the reauthorization of this fee?

Yes = 18                      No = 1                      Unsure = 1

Comments: **Only if potential aquifer degradation is proven; If used for this and other purposes that benefit the aquifer; Yes, increase fee somewhat; Should only be used for what it was intended; An awareness campaign must precede the election to assure good turnout and a favorable vote; Yes, at the same fee.**

## Meeting Evaluation Questions

1. Overall, how would you rate the meeting format, presentation, and opportunities to provide comments?

Good = **11**      Fair = **4**      Poor = **0**

Comments: **It was rushed through the presentation and did not allow time for comments during the presentation; A lot of material was covered in a short time.**

2. How did you learn about this meeting? Please check all that apply:

Notice in *Update* newsletter = **8**

Neighborhood Council = **1**

Article in association newsletter = **1**

Ad in Spokesman-Review = **5**

Notice faxed to business = **3**

From a friend = **3**

Media = **1**

County Web Page = **0**

**Organization Meeting = 1**

How do you prefer to learn about public meetings: **Update newsletter (5); Mail (2); Email notice (2); Letter to resident (1); Newspaper Ads (1); Newspaper(1)**

3. Please share any other ideas and input that will help Spokane County's Wastewater Facilities Planning effort.

Comments: **The newsletter is great;I would like to have a stakeholder interview and receive newsletters at my residence (Gary Dinwoodie);We need to show the neighborhood impacts by showing facilities in cities with similar economic conditions and not describe (pie in the sky) facilities in large California cities.**