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DISTRICT UPDATE NOVEMBER 2022

The Los Olivos CSD was formed in 2018 to give Los Olivos residents and property owners within the district local control over how to provide a funding mechanism for the construction and operation of the facilities needed to collect, treat, and dispose of sewage, wastewater, and recycled water in Los Olivos.

For the past year, we have been diligently gathering information and cost estimates for possible wastewater treatment solutions. Importantly, we have made no final decisions on collection, treatment, disposal, or facility site. The information gathering and development of design options has been largely funded by County of Santa Barbara and State of California grants. We are planning a series of workshops in January and February to discuss the pros and cons of potential solutions, discuss siting of any project, and begin formulating the final project description for our proposed solution. Once the project description is completed, we will proceed with an environmental review of the project, and then to a property owner Proposition 218 vote.

I hope you are attending our monthly meetings in person or virtually to stay current with our information gathering efforts and future deliberations about the best solution for Los Olivos. This is the best way for you to stay informed, to ask questions and get answers, and to ensure your ideas and concerns are heard.

Two Groundwater Monitoring Wells Installed

The District recently placed two groundwater monitoring wells near the northwest and northeast corners of the District. The approximate well placements are shown in the image below.



These initial two wells are part of a larger plan to better understand the impacts our septic tanks have on our groundwater. A copy of the full groundwater monitoring plan can be found at:
<https://www.losolivoscsd.com/files/61f8f5301/Groundwater+Monitoring+Plan+GSI+3.22.2021.pdf>

Our groundwater is a precious natural resource. Regular and consistent measurement of groundwater levels and contaminants provide the most fundamental indicator of the health of this resource and are critical to meaningful evaluations of the quantity and quality of groundwater.

Gearing up for January – March 2023 Public Workshops on Collection, Treatment, Disposal, Siting, Financing, and More

Over the past several months, we held public workshops or meetings to discuss topics such as gravity-fed sewer collection, septic tank effluent pump (STEP) systems, advanced on-site treatment, membrane bioreactor (MBR) treatment plants, plant siting and all of the associated costs. In December, we will hear a recommendation on effluent disposal options from our consultants. Effluent disposal is the final step in any wastewater treatment process as it deals with the resulting “water” (aka effluent) once the waste from our homes and businesses has been treated. Our consultants are considering reuse, shallow aquifer injection wells, percolation ponds, percolation chambers, and the use of Alamo Pintado Creek as an outfall.

By the time our next update is published, we will be completing a series of workshops that are intended to take the information gathered, consider all of the options, and make some decisions about what makes sense for our community. The workshops are planned for January and February and will cover topics such as:

- Proposition 218 property owner benefit assessment process
- Environmental review
- Collection
- Treatment
- Disposal
- Siting
- Financing
- System options, zones, phases, and other implementation scenarios

Collection, Treatment, and Disposal Overview: When thinking about wastewater treatment, it is helpful to separate approaches and technologies used to collect wastewater from the systems and technologies used to treat and dispose of the wastewater.

Collection

We are primarily focused on two potential collection approaches: gravity fed and septic tank effluent pumping (STEP). Gravity fed collection is a traditional sewer system. When using a gravity fed system, a series of pipes is placed in the ground and all the waste from your home or business flows, by gravity, downhill. Once the waste reaches a low-point or the bottom of the hill, it is either pumped uphill using a lift station or treated at that location. Importantly, should we decide on a gravity fed approach, all our septic tanks would be replaced with piping that connects to the community-wide sewage pipes and nothing, beyond the pipes, would remain on your property.

With STEP collection, our septic tanks would be replaced with a tank system that operates much like a septic tank. However, instead of discharging the waste effluent into a leach field on an individual property, the untreated effluent would be sent via a pressurized pipe to a centralized treatment facility. The facility would remove the nitrates and other impurities that resulted in our community being designated as a special problems area in 1972. Since the pipe is pressurized, the collection system could be simpler than a gravity fed collection system. Much like our septic tanks, STEP tanks do need regular pumping and cleaning. The Board has made no determination about who would be responsible for this maintenance. However, future discussion will be held about whether this would be a District or a homeowner responsibility should STEP be chosen as the preferred collection approach.

Treatment

Our District is primarily focused on packaged MBR wastewater treatment solutions for any districtwide implementation given their lower costs and ease of construction, installation, and operation. Like traditional wastewater treatment facilities, MBR packaged systems use a series of physical and biological processes to separate contaminants in the waste stream. Discussion is also continuing on the topic of advanced on-site treatment solutions. These systems typically support one or a very small number of homes and businesses. The early 2023 workshop conversations will help decide what role advanced on-site treatment solutions will have in our overall wastewater treatment plan.

Effluent Disposal

After being highly treated by a packaged MBR plant, resulting effluent can be safely reintroduced into the groundwater basin or used for other applications. For example, you will often see “purple pipe” being used by large municipalities to reuse the recycled water for irrigation, agriculture, and industrial purposes. As previously noted, we will learn more about the costs and benefits of disposal options with our effluent disposal study results in December. Because of the high levels of treatment, numerous options are on the table for effluent disposal.

Your Board is steadfast in its commitment to implement a cost-effective wastewater treatment solution that benefits all District residents, property owners, and our business community. As noted, any final wastewater treatment and water reclamation solution put forth by the Board will be the result of significant community input and is subject to a vote by District property owners in accordance with Proposition 218. This proposed solution must also protect our groundwater quality and meet the regulatory requirements of the [Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board](#) and the [County of Santa Barbara](#). Representatives from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and the County of Santa Barbara Environmental Health Services will participate in a December workshop to help us all better understand their role in regulating water quality and answer questions.

- **Board of Directors:** There were four seats up for election on November 8th. As of this writing our Board of Directors will be (results still subject to certification by the County of Santa Barbara Elections Office):

Tom Fayram – President (term 2020-2024)
Brad Ross – Vice President (term 2022-2024)
Julie Kennedy – Director (term 2022-2026)
Lisa Palmer – Director (term 2022-2026)
Greg Parks – Director (term 2022-2026)

Assuming the vote is certified in time, we anticipate swearing in the new Board of Directors at our December 14 meeting. Results of the November 8th election can be found at:

<https://www.countyofsb.org/3294/Election-Results>

General Manager’s State of the District (December 7): As a prelude to the workshops in early 2023 and to help build a foundation of understanding of potential solutions, issues, and approaches, the General Manager will host a State of the District session on Wednesday, December 7, 2022. The State of the District will consist of a presentation by the General Manager, followed by an open question and answer period. If you need a refresher, want to better understand where we are with our efforts, or have questions we highly encourage you to attend.

Stay Informed: Check the District’s Website for meeting agendas and materials at losolivoscscsd.com or phone us at 805-500-4098. You can also email the General Manager at gm.locsd@gmail.com.

If you haven’t already, please go to <https://www.losolivoscscsd.com/subscribe> to sign up for email updates. Please encourage your neighbors, property owners and other interested community members to sign up as well.

If you have any questions about our District’s efforts, please contact Guy Savage, General Manager, at gm.locsd@gmail.com or call him at (805) 500-4098.

