

District seeks public's thoughts on new sewer plant proposal

By Nick Baptista/ The Valley Springs News/ Friday, May 29, 2015

The Valley Springs Public Utility District is taking a preliminary step in an effort to eventually relocate its wastewater treatment plant.

The district is accepting written comments on the proposed project between now and 5 p.m. June 29.

The water treatment plant replacement study and associated environmental documents are being posted to the district's website at vspud.com for public review. Comments on the documents can be submitted by mail to VSPUD, P.O. Box 284, Valley Springs, CA 95252, or hand delivered to the VSPUD office at 150 Sequoia Ave.

The district is pursuing plans to replace its existing sewer plant off State Route 12/26 next to the Valley Oaks Shopping Center.

The treatment plant was designed in the 1950's, according to VSPUD General Manager Mike Fischer, and is out of compliance with some modern wastewater treatment standards.

Those include the treatment plant is located in the flood plain off Cosgrove Creek, the effluent storage reservoir is undersized to handle a 100-year storm, and the existing facility could cause degradation or pollution to shallow groundwater in the area. In addition, there is no room for expansion at the current location.

The district is looking at moving the wastewater treatment plant to the Tom Coe property on Paloma Road, two miles north of the existing plant, said Matt Ospital, an engineer for the district.

Coe has been willing to donate the property to the district with an agreement a wastewater education center would be established at the site.

The district is seeking a \$6 million government grant and \$2.8 million in a low-interest U.S. Department of Agriculture loan to finance the new plant, Ospital added.

VSPUD used the same combination of grant and loan a few years ago to finance improvements to its well and water storage system.

The district considered several alternatives and moving the facility with the help of a no-cost grant, low-interest loan and donated property surfaced as the least expensive option for ratepayers.

Upon completion of the public review period, the project will go back to the board, Ospital said.

The board will then consider approving the environmental documents, paving the way to go forward with the project and pursue construction financing.

The public financing comes on a “first-come, first-served” basis, Ospital said, so it would be beneficial to the district to get the request in as soon as possible.

If the project moves smoothly, Ospital sees 2017 as the earliest completion date.