Overview of the DCL Sewer System

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The Deep Creek Lake Sewer System is a public system that has multiple commercial and residential users.  The system was constructed in 1985 and like any public utility system, this system will continue to require upgrades and improvements.   The Deep Creek Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant was expanded in 2004 to increase the capacity/volume from 900,000 gallons a day to a daily capacity level of 2.2 million.  Expansions of the service area are planned for the Western Conveyance Sewer Project that will add additional capacity and an option for a reversal of the flow direction that will increase the efficiency of the system.  The Western Conveyance Project also includes a public water component expansion.

While we undertake regular preventative maintenance, on a system the size of the Deep Creek Lake Sewer System, unforeseen problems can and do occur. In the past, we have experienced incidents that resulted from misuse of the system by its customers, mechanical failure of system components as well as failures in operational oversight. The County and DPW take seriously each and every incident or problem that the system encounters. It is our goal to respond promptly and to learn from each problem that we encounter. We constantly strive to correct and improve system wide maintenance and to monitor the system to minimize any problems that we encounter. As with any underground system inspection of the lines is difficult. Our system, which is a pressurized system, was constructed 30 years ago. Over the last 30 years there have been operational challenges but we believe that we have taken steps to improve the maintenance and monitoring of our system and have taken steps to address operational deficiencies through personnel reorganization.  Our response time to the 2 most recent red light emergency situations was less than 2 hours.   This was expeditious and staff was on site until all cleanups were completed.  The January 31 spill resulted in 9,600 gallons of leakage and the February 2 spill was 1,200 gallons.  The environmental restriction for the January 31, 2014 occurrence was lifted by the Garrett County Health Department within 12 hours.

 For January 2014, the Deep Creek Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant collected and processed over 12 million (12,000,000) gallons of sewage and experienced 11,800 gallons in spills.   DPW staff reported that for calendar year 2013 the Deep Creek Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant collected and processed over 140 million (140,000,000) gallons of sewage and the actual gallons of spillage was less than 50,000.  This is 99.96% clean process ratio. While we are pleased with our progress, we strive to have no incidents where untreated water escapes treatment. To put this in perspective, our Staff has reported that failing septic systems in the Deep Creek Watershed produce sewer leakage far in excess of past spills from the Deep Creek Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant, pump stations, or service lines. We continue to work with the Garrett County Health Department in identifying and correcting these non-system problems as well.

 Users of the Deep Creek Lake Sewer System do not always use wise judgment and occasionally renters try to force bed sheets, clothing, mop heads, cardboard, towels, etc… into the service lines.   This creates serious problems.  DPWU staff is skilled, dedicated, and committed to their jobs.  I am very proud of their response time and total time for any environmental orders to be lifted is always well above any comparable standard.    Yes there are still sewer gas odors coming from certain substations but we know what causes these and investments in improvement measures have proven to be successful.

Have questions: contact Mr. Pagenhart at *mpagenhardt@garrettcounty.org*