

Growing Eugene seeks waste plant

Last in a series on
growth in Lane County

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

By the year 2000, there will be nearly 300,000 people living in the Eugene-Springfield area. But without the expansion of existing sewage treatment plants and the construction of a new plant, the area may not be able to accommodate that many people, says a member of the Metropolitan Wastewater Management Commission.

Bill Pye says growth in the county during the next 21 years will make the existing sewage treatment plants obsolete in the next few years.

To accommodate the increased population, a new wastewater treatment plant has been planned for the county. However, federal funding problems may complicate that plant's construction.

The Metropolitan Wastewater Management Commission is a special service district created

by Lane County and the cities of Eugene and Springfield to handle the problems of wastewater. The commission levies taxes and sells bonds to finance the operation of sewage treatment plants in the area.

The treatment plant, a \$104.9 million venture, was first proposed to accommodate the projected population increase in the 1990 Metropolitan Plan for growth in the county.

The construction of the treatment plant, as well as other improvements in transportation and public services, is all tied to the 1990 Plan, which was first adopted by the three governments in 1972. Since that time, the plan has been used as a guideline for growth management in the county.

The 1990 Plan predicts more than 250,000 new residents will settle in Eugene and Springfield during the next 11 years. To handle that increase, the plan allows for annexations, increased density in residential areas and utilities such as

sewage, water and electrical services.

An update of the 1990 Plan was presented to the public in February and included three alternatives to growth density, including low, medium and high density areas in the county. A decision on the alternatives will not be made until sometime next year.

Before that decision can be made, however, the proposed sewage treatment plant may be hurt because of a lack of money, Pye says.

The plant's fate hinges on whether the state Environmental Quality Commission will allocate reduced federal funds for the project. The EQC was told earlier this year that nearly \$12 million in federal funds would not be available for similar water projects in Oregon through 1982.

The EQC expected to receive \$64.8 million to fund such projects. Congressional appropriations, however, cut that to \$53.7 million.

That loss of funding could jeopardize the treatment plant project, Pye says, because each year the plant is delayed, inflation causes the construction costs to rise. Voters in Lane County approved a \$29.5 million bond issue last summer to pay a share of the building costs, but that might not be enough if the federal share, amounting to 75 percent is lost.

"Because of this, the whole state of Oregon funding is cut back," Pye says. "Everyone's project is delayed."

The EQC set priorities for the money at a public hearing in early March. The wastewater treatment plant is 15th on the list.

To fill the gap, Eugene-area officials have proposed that the present treatment plants in Eugene and Springfield be upgraded to primary treatment facilities and used in a two-part system that would pump solid waste north to a secondary

treatment lagoon.

That idea is more expensive than the first, Pye says. And it might not accommodate the increased population in the next two decades.

The present treatment plants now handle nearly all the wastewater from the metropolitan areas. Outlying areas, such as Santa Clara, rely on septic tanks for waste removal.

That method, known as lagoon treatment of waste, wouldn't work, Pye says, because it would also require a large area for the treatment facilities.

"You're talking about a lagoon one-quarter the size of the Fern Ridge Reservoir," he says.

Treating the wastes of nearly 250,000 people will require the new facility, Pye says, because it will be built to function for several decades. But until the problem of federal money can be solved, the plant and its treatment facilities may be shelved, he explains.

Knickerbocker bike bridge spans river

By BERNARD SCHWARTZ
For the Emerald

The new Willie Knickerbocker Bridge has more to it than the joggers and bicyclists already using it might think.

Nestled between the support beams of the newest bridge over the Willamette River is a water transmission line, making the facility near Interstate 5 an aqueduct in disguise.

The disguise took root last year, when the Eugene Water and Electric Board faced the task of quenching the thirst of South Eugene residents.

Originally, EWEB planned to run a water pipe through a trench dug across the Willamette's bed.

"When we leave an area, we prefer to leave no visual impact if that's possible," says EWEB engineer Gary Jackson, "so we leaned towards trenching," which is also less expensive.

Since bicycling is so popular in Eugene, EWEB approached

the county with the idea of running the water line above the river in combination with a bicycle bridge. Jackson says. The result now stands between I-5 and the Autzen footbridge.

EWEB contracted the Oregon Bridge Engineering Company of Springfield to design the 523-foot span. The entire project, including the water lines approaching the bridge from each end, cost \$1,252,000. The bridge alone cost \$381,890, according to Jackson.

EWEB paid for the bridge, with Lane County, the city of Eugene and the state of Oregon reimbursing it for the \$72,000 cost of adding the bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

When plans for the bridge were approved, Dan Sellard, a Eugene Register-Guard reporter, asked EWEB Pres. John Tiffany to name the bridge after Willie Knickerbocker, whom Sellard called the "father of bicycling in Eugene."

Knickerbocker, born in Clayville, New York, in 1867, was a common sight in Eugene during the 1940s and 1950s, says Diane Bishop of the Eugene Bicycle Committee. Willie used to ride wherever he went, doing tricks for anyone who would watch.

Every year, Knickerbocker rode his bike in the annual Emerald Empire Pet Parade, doing tricks for the children lining the parade route. He died in 1960 at the age of 92.

Bishop says the bridge is an unexpected but welcome addition to the network of bike routes in Eugene, and it will provide another needed river-crossing between Eugene and Springfield.

Bishop says her committee is working on other bicycle projects including the painting of the re-designed bicycle lanes along 18th Avenue, the addition of new bike lanes on Bertelson

and Seneca Streets, new paths along the Amazon channel between 19th and 30th Avenues and long-range plans for bicycle routes along the entire length of the Amazon channel.

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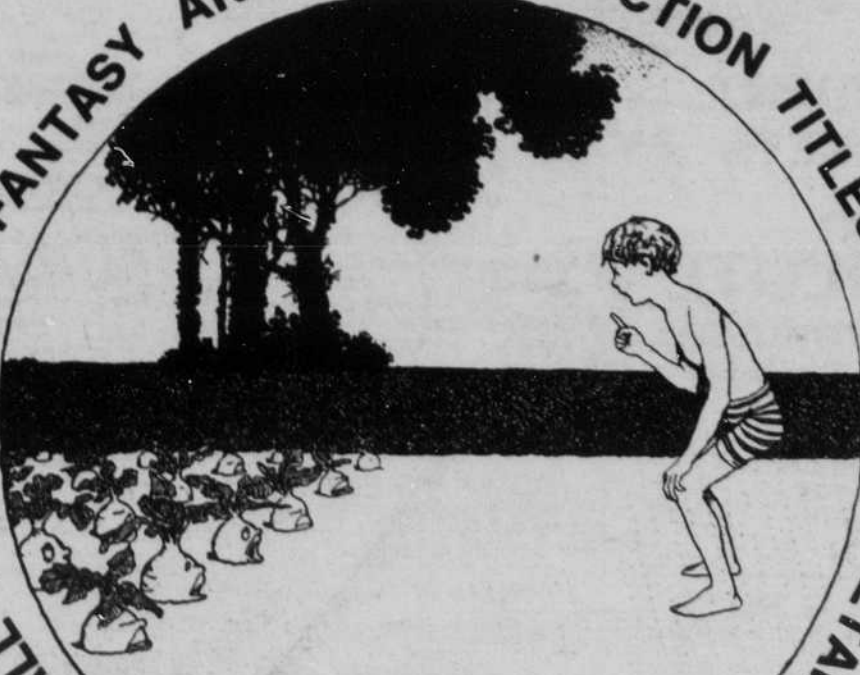
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