



City of Nampa

Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Upgrade

Wastewater Advisory Group

Meeting #7 Summary

March 15, 2012 ♦ 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Hugh Nichols Public Safety Building
820 2nd St. South
Nampa, Idaho 83687



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Overview

The City of Nampa must implement an extensive program to upgrade how it treats and disposes its wastewater in order to meet anticipated stricter regulations.

The purpose of the Nampa Wastewater Advisory Group (NWAG) is to provide guidance to the City of Nampa on how best to upgrade its wastewater treatment and disposal system. Nampa must make upgrade decisions by early 2012.

NWAG Meeting #7 Agenda and Format

The City of Nampa hosted the seventh Nampa Wastewater Advisory Group (NWAG) meeting on Thursday, March 15, 2012 at the Hugh Nichols Public Safety Building in Nampa.

The meeting objectives were to:

- Review what has been accomplished during the NWAG process.
- Gather input from NWAG participants.
- Outline next steps.

Agenda:

- Welcome and workshop objectives – Michael Fuss, P.E., Public Works Director, City of Nampa
- Accomplishments to date – Steve Burgos, Senior Associate, Brown and Caldwell
- Advisory group discussion and input – Rosemary Curtin, Public Involvement Consultant, RBCI
- Breakout group reports
- Next steps – Michael Fuss

Each attendee was provided the following handouts:

- Agenda for NWAG Meeting #7
- PowerPoint presentation for NWAG Meeting #7
- Summary of NWAG comments
- “Long-Term Options Ranking” comment form

Presentation Summary

Welcome and workshop objectives – Michael Fuss, P.E., Public Works Director, City of Nampa

Michael Fuss thanked all meeting attendees for participating in the Wastewater Advisory Group (NWAG) process over the past eight months. Michael then began the meeting with the following remarks:

- The City greatly appreciates all the time that NWAG members have committed to participating in this process and learning about the wastewater issues.
- Since August 2011, the NWAG has learned about the need for the wastewater upgrades, the range of possible long-term upgrade options and options for how the City could fund the upgrades.
- This meeting is an opportunity for NWAG members to provide their thoughts and opinions about the information they have learned throughout this process.

Accomplishments to date – Steve Burgos, Senior Associate, Brown and Caldwell

Steve reviewed the work that has been accomplished during the NWAG process:

- The City is continuing to make good process on developing a Wastewater Program Action Plan. The plan includes technical evaluation of the upgrade options, financing and rate studies, coordinating with regulators, public outreach and reaching key decision points.
- Several key decisions will be made in the near-future. On March 29, the Program Management Team will meet with Nampa's City Council and ask them to decide whether or not the City should phase the upgrades.
- The decision of phasing the upgrades will determine the impact on Nampa's wastewater rates.
- No decisions have been made yet regarding phasing, which long-term upgrade option is preferred or which funding option is preferred.
- To date, the City has:
 - Identified the possibility of phasing the upgrades.
 - Presented the option of phasing to the NWAG.
 - Narrowed the range of long-term upgrade options.
 - Educated the NWAG participants about each long-term upgrade option.
 - Provided more detailed costs for the upgrade options.
 - Developed a Business Case Evaluation for each upgrade option that identifies risk and benefit costs.

- Discussed financing options with the NWAG participants.
- Gathered input about phasing, the long-term upgrade options and financing options from:
 - The NWAG (seven meetings)
 - Nampa’s Industrial Working Group (five meetings)
 - Nampa’s Electronic Survey Group (three surveys)
- NWAG members will be asked to provide input on phasing. Phasing is an implementation approach the City is considering.
 - No matter which upgrade option is selected, the treatment plant will need to be upgraded, either for phosphorus removal (discharge to Indian Creek) or nitrogen removal (land application).
 - If the City decides to pursue phasing, upgrades would be made to the treatment plant to meet the anticipated interim 2018 phosphorus limit of 0.5 mg/L. The City would continue to investigate long-term options for how to best meet the anticipated 2023 phosphorus limit of 0.07 mg/L. A long-term option would be selected between 2013 and 2018. The long-term upgrade option would then be implemented to meet the 2023 phosphorus requirement of 0.07 mg/L.
 - Sewer rates will need to be increased to cover the costs of upgrading the treatment plant to meet 2018 permit requirements.
 - As the first phase of upgrades are being made to the plant, the City would continue to investigate Direct and Rapid Infiltration, Treat and Offset and Treat to EPA Levels as long-term options for complying with the future permit limits.
 - Upgrading the wastewater treatment and disposal system in two phases would allow the City to adjust its options as new permit requirements are determined. The City would have a better ability to navigate through the uncertain regulatory processes if it is given more time to determine a long-term option.
 - Phasing of upgrades could help manage rate increases.
 - The phasing decision has not been made. No decisions have been made at all. The Program Management Team will be working with the Nampa City Council toward decision points over the next few months.

NWAG summary of comments – Kate Nice, Public Involvement Consultant, RBCI

Over the past eight months Nampa Wastewater Advisory Group (NWAG) participants completed and submitted 220 comments sheets. The comments submitted by NWAG participants:

- Helped the Program Management Team better serve the advisory group process.

- Helped the Program Management Team understand and better address the issues and concerns with the upgrade process and options being considered.
- Will give the Nampa City Council a sample of citizens' perspectives as the Council makes decisions regarding the wastewater upgrade and funding options.

Comments from the NWAG participants are summarized below.

Phasing the upgrades

What do you like and dislike about the phased approach? (13 comment sheets returned)

Most commonly repeated comment(s):

Likes

- Would allow more flexibility for meeting future requirements.
- Would give the City more time to make a decision.
- Less immediate cost.

Dislikes

- There are too many future unknowns (i.e., uncertain future regulations).
- Not enough data (specifically about cost).
- Too early to tell.

Funding comments

What questions or comments do you have on the cash (pay-as-you-go) funding option? (6 comment sheets returned)

Comment (s):

- Try to make the cash option work.
- Expecting a bond to pass is unreliable.
- Gradually raise rates over a period of time.
- Need more time to review and understand the information.
- Politically, this would be unpopular.

What questions or comments do you have on the bond financing option? (6 comment sheets returned)

Comment(s):

- Expecting a bond to pass is unreliable.
- Would prefer a steady, incremental rate increase.
- Debt financing is a good option for investments of this magnitude.
- Need more time to review and understand the information.
- Either option has relatively competitive rates.
- Rates are rarely dropped; once rates are raised, they will stay raised even when upgrades are complete.

Option #1: Direct Infiltration

What do you like and dislike about the Direct Infiltration option? (13 comment sheets returned)

Most commonly repeated comment(s):

Likes

- Would be able to use recycled water as a resource.
- Less land.
- Diminishes EPA's role in the regulatory process.
- Less costs.
- Potential for economic development.

Dislikes

- More expensive treatment process.
- Economic development benefits are uncertain.
- Risk of future unknown regulations.

Option #2: Rapid Infiltration

What do you like and dislike about the Rapid Infiltration option? (17 comment sheets returned)

Most commonly repeated comment(s):

Likes

- Lower cost than Direct Infiltration.
- Use of water as a potential resource.
- Diminishes EPA's role in the regulatory process.
- Possible recreational benefits.

Dislikes

- More land would be needed.
- Higher cost for land.
- Requires new regulations (Idaho Department of Environmental Quality).
- Limited reuse of water.
- Pollution could build up in the soil.
- Class C water is not safe for human contact.

Option #3: Treat and Offset

What do you like and dislike about the Treat and Offset option? (13 comment sheets returned)

Most commonly repeated comment(s):

Likes

- Low impact on the environment.
- Lower cost.

Dislikes

- Uncertain regulatory risks are too great.
- Not a long-term solution.

Option #4: Treat to EPA Levels

What do you like and dislike about the Treat to EPA levels option? (22 comment sheets returned)

Note: Many NWAG participants appear to be confused with the Treat to EPA levels option and the phasing approach. Participants thought the phasing approach is a good long-term solution and will help prepare for growth.

Most commonly repeated comment(s):

Likes

- Flexibility of the phased approach.
- Tried and true approach.

Dislikes

- Cost.
- It is not a long-term solution to meet future unknown Clean Water Act regulations.
- Nampa would still be under the control of EPA.
- Treated water would still be discharged into Indian Creek.
- Use of more chemicals.

Option #5: Do Nothing More

What do you like and dislike about the Do Nothing More option? (22 comment sheets returned)

Most commonly repeated comment(s):

Likes

- Nothing – not a viable option.

Dislikes

- Everything – not a viable option.
- Water quality of Boise River would continue to be degraded.
- Would give Nampa a negative image and may keep away future industries/businesses.

Thoughts about the NWAG process

Participants were provided with a Meeting Evaluation comment sheet at each of the first six NWAG meetings. The Meeting Evaluation comment sheets gave participants the opportunity to submit written questions and provide their thoughts about what worked well and what didn't work well. NWAG participants submitted 108 Meeting Evaluation comment sheets throughout the process.

What is working well with the Nampa Wastewater Advisory Group process?

Most commonly repeated comment(s):

- The presentations were very informative, clear and easy to understand.
- The engineers and city leaders were well informed (specifically Steve Burgos).
- The process was well organized.
- Having the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers from experts was very helpful.
- The process resulted in participants having a better understanding of wastewater treatment and the need for upgrades.
- The tour of the wastewater plant and Dixie Drain pilot project was helpful.
- The NWAG was diverse, inclusive and well represented the residents and businesses of Nampa.

What is not working so well with the Nampa Wastewater Advisory Group Process?

Most NWAG participants said they were satisfied with the process and thought everything was working well. The few comments submitted about what didn't work well included:

- The meetings provided a lot of information and participants need time to fully understand this information before submitting comments.
- The meetings need to stay focused on the tasks at hand and not the politics.
- Participants ask lots of questions during the presentations, which tends to lead the presentations off topic.
- Some participants don't stay up to speed or read all the information provided.

What are your concerns about Nampa's wastewater upgrade process?

Most NWAG participants commented that they do not have any concerns with the process. The concerns that were raised included:

- Costs.
- The projected economic benefits of the infiltration options might be overestimated.
- There is not enough detail to fully understand the risk/benefit analysis.
- It is overly optimistic to assume Nampa residents will easily pass a bond to finance the upgrades.
- NWAG participants were provided with a lot of complicated information that takes time to fully understand.

Overview of advisory group discussion and input – Rosemary Curtin, Public Involvement Consultant, RBCI

Rosemary Curtin thanked the NWAG participants for attending all of the meetings and committing time to learning about the wastewater issues. The purpose of this meeting is to give NWAG participants the opportunity to provide feedback on all the information they have learned during this process.

- The NWAG divided into four working groups: Red Team, Blue Team, Green Team and Orange Team. Each team was assigned a facilitator who helped lead the small group discussion and ensure everyone is involved.
- The small group discussions were tape recorded in order to accurately record all comments. The tape recordings help with the development of the meeting summary.
- Participants in each group introduced themselves and the facilitator made a list of all the group participants on the flip chart.
- The small group discussions used a “round robin style” of facilitation, where the facilitator went around the group and asked everyone for comments. If a participant did not have a comment, they had the option to “pass.”

Summary of breakout group reports

Twenty-seven NWAG members attended this meeting and participated in the small group discussion exercise. During the small group discussions the NWAG participants were asked to provide feedback on the following questions:

1) Do you understand why the City needs to complete the upgrades?

Summary of small group discussions:

- All NWAG participants stated they do understand why the City needs to upgrade its wastewater system.

2) What are your thoughts/comments/questions on phasing?

Summary of small group discussions:

- Phasing would give the City more flexibility and time to gather input before selecting a long-term upgrade option.
- Phasing would be a responsible decision because regulations could change in the future (get stricter or less restrictive).
- This approach is only “kicking the can down the road.” The decision of having to select a long-term upgrade option will have to be made eventually.
- In the long run, phasing would be less expensive.
- Would allow time to see if the Dixie Drain project is successful.
- If phasing is chosen, the City would need to explain the financial benefits to residents.
- Would give more time to work with regulators and explain Nampa’s unique (Indian Creek) situation. This could allow more leeway with discharge regulations.
- It is uncertain if the costs would really be the same with phasing.
- Phasing could be a better way, but it could tire people.
- There is concern that phasing could incur additional costs.

3) Do you support phasing improvements and moving forward with Phase 1?

Summary of small group discussions:

- Twenty-six participants said they support phasing the wastewater upgrades.
- One participant said they did not support phasing the wastewater upgrades. This participant said they support upgrading the treatment plant to meet the 0.5 mg/L phosphorus level, but he does not believe any improvements need to be made to the wastewater system after this.
- Additional comments:
 - Phasing is a good option if it makes an easier decision for City Council.
 - There is some uncertainty of the initial level of funding needed for phasing.
 - Some participants said they do not want to see the City ultimately spend more money by choosing to phase the improvements, rather than just making the long-term decision.

4) What are your thoughts/comments/questions on how to fund the upgrades?

Summary of small group discussions:

- Many NWAG participants were uncertain of how a bond would work (e.g., the length of time it would take to pay off the debt).
- If the community votes down the bond, rates would still need to be increased.
- One large rate increase is not a good option.
- Rate increases should be incremental.
- The pay-as-you-go (cash) option would avoid putting the City in debt.
- Cash option could earn interest rather than paying interest.
- It might be a good option to pay for the first phase of upgrades with cash and the second phase with a bond.
- Another option would be for Nampa to use two bonds, one to pay for Phase 1 and a second bond to pay for Phase 2.
- A bond could be a good option because more people would pay for the upgrades over a longer period of time.
- If bonding is the option chosen, the City would need to work hard to “sell” this idea to Nampa citizens.
- Rate increases could generate a public reaction similar to the implementation of Nampa’s stormwater utility.
- The City needs to work with industries and the Nampa community to find a funding option that works for everyone.
- It is very important that the City communicate with the public about raising rates to fund the wastewater upgrades.

5) Do you support funding the upgrades through pay-as-you-go (cash payment)? Do you support funding the upgrades with bonding? (Note: the participants were asked to comment on their level of support for both the cash and bonding options. Participants were not asked to pick which option they prefer.)

Summary of small group discussions:

- The majority of participants said they would support both the pay-as-you-go (cash) option and bonding option. Many participants said they need more information about these funding options before making a final decision.
- Additional comments:
 - Cash payment could be cheaper in the long run.
 - Paying in advance is a better option.
 - Debt should be avoided.
 - Need to know the terms of payment.
 - Cash payment should be used to fund Phase 1 upgrades and bonding should be used to fund Phase 2 upgrades.
 - Bonding should only be used to fund Phase 2.
 - Bonding would bring more public awareness to the need for the wastewater upgrades.
 - If bonding is chosen, need to keep in consideration that it is very likely a bond could not pass. The City would need to have a backup funding alternative if the bond did not pass.

6) What are your thoughts/comments/questions on the long-term upgrade options?

Summary of small group discussions:

- The City should use this opportunity to take control of the resource of using recycled water.
- Choose option with highest ability to use water resources.
- Water is a commodity that should not be disposed of.
- City should not discharge into waters of the U.S.
- With infiltration, there is a great need to be sensitive of putting treated wastewater back into aquifers. Don't want to put "junk" into the aquifers.
- Do not like the idea of adding more chemicals to treat the wastewater.
- Treat and offset seems to have a lot of uncertainty.
- Infiltration is appealing because it could offer recreational/wildlife habitat benefits.
- Like direct infiltration because:
 - It allows the City to manage water as a resource.
 - Has possibility of economic development (as shown in cost/benefit analysis).
 - Class A water could allow potential for economic development.
- Like rapid infiltration because it is less costly.

7) Please rank the five possible long-term upgrade options from 1 to 5 according to which one you prefer the most, to which one you prefer the least.

NWAG participants answered this question by filling out a comment form. The table below shows how NWAG participants responded to this question.

	<i>1 = Most preferred</i>	<i>2 = Second most preferred</i>	<i>3 = Third most preferred</i>	<i>4 = Fourth most preferred</i>	<i>5 = Least preferred</i>
Option #1: Direct Infiltration	19	6	2	0	0
Option #2: Rapid Infiltration	5	17	5	0	0
Option #3: Treat and Offset	3	4	16	4	0
Option #4: Treat to EPA Levels	0	0	4	22	1
Option #5: Do Nothing More	0	0	0	0	27

8) What role should the public have as the upgrade process moves forward?

Summary of comments:

- Public education is the most important part.
- The City needs to use many methods to educate the community about the rate increase
 - Public meetings
 - Media
 - Information in utility bills
 - City's website
 - Social media (City's Facebook page)
 - Attend/provide information at community events, receptions, farmers market
 - Billboards
 - Pop-up announcement on the City's bill pay website
- The City needs to be upfront and honest with the public that sewer rates will be increased.
- Need to allow more time to prepare for the rate increase.
- Encourage people to come to the public hearing about the rate increase.
- City needs to reach out to agricultural community.
- Nampa could get advice from other cities on how they successfully educated their communities about rate increases.
- Need to make sure the public knows these upgrades are mandated by the EPA.
- Make the information non-threatening, spin this into a positive for the City.
- A written brochure about the upgrades and rate increase would be helpful.

9) What are your thoughts about the NWAG process (positive and negative)?

Summary of small group discussions:

- Positive:
 - Educational.
 - Gave industry and citizens the opportunity to give input.
 - Well attended with a diversity of people.
 - Good way to give City Council information about what the people think and want.
 - Presenters and City staff did a good job.
 - Steve Burgos has great knowledge and was very informative.
 - RBCI's communication with NWAG participants was very helpful.
 - Liked the tours of the Nampa's treatment plant and the Dixie Drain Pilot Project.
 - Appreciate the respect we have been given, the City needs input on these wastewater issues.
 - Presentations gave an open, broad representation of the situation.
 - The process gave enough time for participants to fully learn and understand the complexities of the upgrade process.
- Negative:
 - Would have appreciated more City Council members attending the meetings.

- The process was time consuming.
- It was sometimes hard to determine the facts and figures.
- The costs of the options are not clear.
- More cost information is needed.
- Worried that this whole process will have no real impact on the City Council’s decision (this was all just “window dressing”).
- Would have been helpful to have more financing information.
- Regarding costs, a lot of information was presented at once and too close to the end of the process.
- The cost information was overwhelming.
- Suggestions:
 - Committee needs to communicate with City Council members.
 - It should have been a requirement for City Council members to attend these meetings.
 - Virtual simulations of each upgrade option might be a good idea. That way, people could really see and understand how each option would work.

10) What are your thoughts about the Business Case Evaluation Process (positive and negative)?

Summary of small group discussions:

- The Program Management Team did a great job of presenting this complex information and costs.
- It helped to have good knowledgeable people leading the evaluations.
- The Business Case Evaluation Process was a good approach, this approach is used in industry.
- Need to be careful with the variables, don’t skew them.
- Uncertain of where the numbers came from.
- The presentation of costs fell short and was too condensed.

11) Would you be willing to speak with members of your community and explain your thoughts about the upgrade process?

NWAG participants answered this question by filling out a comment form. The table below shows how NWAG participants responded to this question.

Yes	No	Unsure	No response
17	5	3	2

- Nearly all of the NWAG participants said they would be willing to speak with members of their community and explain their preference regarding the long-term upgrade options.
- Many NWAG participants indicated they would like to continue to be involved as the wastewater upgrade process moves forward.

What next – Michael Fuss, City of Nampa

Based on the NWAG's input, the Program Management Team will provide recommendations to Nampa's City Council.

Nampa's City Council will need to make key decisions regarding phasing, evaluation of the long-term upgrade options and how to best fund the upgrades.

Input from the NWAG will help the City Council make more informed decisions as the wastewater upgrade process moves forward.