

## Press Release

The Tuckasegee Water and Sewer Authority (TWSA) has received a draft Professional Engineering Report (PER) covering the need for additional wastewater capacity in the Cashiers community. This report is the culmination of more than 11 years of work to identify the best course of action to secure additional wastewater treatment capacity for the community and will be used to secure financing for the project. The options for the community became complicated by the re-classification of the Chattooga River as an Outstanding Resource Water stream by NCDENR and the resulting rules that prevented any additional treated wastewater discharges to that stream in the Cashiers community. This river is the receiving stream for the current TWSA Cashiers Wastewater Treatment Plant.

As a result, a four year process to identify an alternative discharge location on the Horsepasture River was completed. This work included identifying a preferred property, holding a series of public meetings and performing a complete environmental and cultural resource study to ensure that the proposed project was feasible on the selected site. This 16 acre site east of Cashiers on Hwy 64 was purchased and a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit was obtained for a new discharge to the Horsepasture River. This permit has been issued with very tight discharge standards to ensure the high quality waters in the Horsepasture River are protected. The permit does allow the additional capacity to be constructed in 3 phases so the capital costs of the project can be controlled.

In a presentation to the TWSA Board at their September 13th, 2016 Work Session by McGill Associates, two final options for meeting the need for additional wastewater treatment capacity have been analyzed in detail. The first option considered in the PER was the possibility of converting the existing Wastewater Treatment Plant on the Chattooga River to a different treatment process and building a new discharge pipe for additional flows to the permitted location on the Horsepasture River. The second option considered is the construction of a new Wastewater Treatment Plant on the 16 acre site located on the Horsepasture River, with the associated permitted discharge location into the river at this site.

The draft PER indicates that the most economical option is the construction of a new Wastewater Treatment Plant on the Horsepasture River. In addition to the financial advantages other benefits of building a second plant include greater flexibility in handling peak flows and performing maintenance in the future by being able to send wastewater to two different treatment plants. The extremely small size of the existing Wastewater Treatment Plant site and the limitations it presents on future operations is an additional factor in the analysis, with the new plant site offering much needed space for supporting facilities.

The PER also addresses needed improvements in the sewer collection system, which includes the pipe and pump stations that collect and convey sewage from the community to the treatment facilities. The PER includes work on the existing collection system, and

a plan to extend new collection lines into potential new service areas of the Cashiers community in the future. The PER has projections for growth over a 20 year planning period, with the need for 495,000 gallons per day of treatment capacity projected in the planning period.

At the TWSA Board Meeting on September 20th, 2016 the construction of the new plant on the 16 acres site on the Horsepasture River was identified as the preferred option. A consolidated list of review comments from the TWSA Board and Staff on the Draft PER is being prepared and will be submitted to the consulting engineer. Upon receipt of those comments by the engineer, a final report will be prepared incorporating these changes. This final report will be made available for public review, including posting a copy in a public forum in the Cashiers community. The PER will be submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture- Rural Development as part of an application for Grant and Loan funding of the project. A financial analysis, a rate study and updated environmental report based on the preferred option will also be prepared in these final steps in the planning process. With these final steps it is anticipated that the path forward for this project will be identified and detailed design will commence in the near future.

TWSA has invested \$1,272,403.00 to date on this project to complete the required advanced planning, environmental studies, land acquisitions, permitting and now to assemble a financing package through USDA-RD and proceed with design. Support for the project has also been received from the Jackson County Commissioners through their approval of an application for a Grant through the Golden Leaf Foundation. This project has received support from the Golden Leaf Foundation through the award of a grant in the amount of \$460,800.00 to be used toward the construction costs of the project. The balance of the project costs for the first phase of work to build the new plant and connect the collection sewer systems is estimated to be \$7,114,200.00.