

Background

The Woodacre Flats Wastewater Group (WFWG), a group of local homeowners, has been meeting regularly for three years to address the problems with septic systems in the “flats” of Woodacre, including Redwood and Railroad Avenues between San Geronimo Valley Drive and Carson Ave., all of Central Ave., lower Taylor Ave., Carson between Redwood and Central, and San Geronimo Valley Drive between Park and Redwood.

WFWG’s mission is to facilitate a comprehensive community process, building on factual information, leading to a community decision about whether to proceed with a project to improve wastewater management. We are not advocating for a particular project at this time.

Information received from the County’s free and anonymous septic inspection program and results from water quality monitoring conducted over the winter of 2007/08 confirmed that a very high percentage of septic systems on the flats are failing.

Attendees of four large community meetings have informally endorsed the efforts of WFWG to carry out a feasibility study, and Woodacre community members contributed over \$11,000 to fund the study. A matching County grant and a grant from the US EPA have provided the balance of the funding and Questa Engineering was hired to conduct the study, which is now complete. A detailed presentation will be made at the meeting on May 10.

Since there are many questions to be resolved in our community before a project is undertaken, the WFWG would like to recommend a three meeting process to enable thorough consideration of all issues. We will review the proposed process at the meeting. It is anticipated that, at the end of this process a decision will be made to either terminate efforts, or move on to the next phase of the effort – an Environmental Impact Report. **It is critical that all property owners in the Woodacre Flats area engage in this decision making process. Please attend or send your representative.**

Potential project benefits

- Correct what is now known to be a high number of failing systems on the Woodacre flats
- Come in to compliance with State, County laws
- Improve watershed health, reduce human health risks
- Provide a leg up for homeowners who wish to legalize non-permitted additions/structures on their property. Having a functional wastewater system is key to legalization. (Note: In the Marshall community, residents were allowed to hook up to the new community system with no reporting of non-permitted development, via a “firewall” agreement with the Environmental Health Division).
- Grouped environmental review and permitting, managed professionally, versus taking on county permits by yourself
- Professional management of a system or systems

Potential financial benefits for homeowners

- A community wastewater project in the Marshall community has been built and is a model for Woodacre. Homeowners there benefited from:
- Improved property values – estimated to be \$100,000 by two local real estate agents
- Significant cost savings via grants and consolidation as a group project: In Marshall where a similar project was undertaken, “hooking up” to the new system cost about \$40,000 per home, but homeowners only paid \$19,000, because of grants received. Each homeowner’s portion was financed at low interest over 20 years, plus an annual operating fee of \$700/year. If repaired individually the homeowners likely would have spent \$40-90,000 upfront, and had operating fees of \$1200/year.

Questions? Feel free to contact members of the Woodacre Flats Wastewater Group:

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