

**4 County Wastewater Task Force (4CWWTF) Meeting Minutes
Sunrise Beach Fire Protection District Task Force Meeting
January, 28, 2011**

60 attendees

The meeting was called to order with a general welcome by Jim Rogers and then followed by round robin introductions of the audience: Jim Rogers: Co-Chair 4CWWTF/LOWA Wastewater Chair/ Lake of the Ozarks Board of Realtors commented that, "We have a group filled with talent, elected officials and people who can get this job done."

As part of the introduction, it was noted that there are 12,000 to 15,000 grandfathered septic systems around the Lake shoreline. To fix one of those systems could cost upwards of \$25,000, and even up to \$35,000 to update. So the Lake area is looking at almost \$300 million plus just in fixes. Therefore, one can make a case for trying to get those systems hooked into some sort of wastewater treatment facility instead of maintaining septic tanks around the Lake. Many lots around the Lake shoreline simply are not conducive to effective septic tanks. Many lots do not have enough soil or enough room for a traditional septic system to work effectively. Studies conducted over the last 30 years have all reached the same conclusion: septic tanks need to be removed from the shoreline of the Lake of the Ozarks.

Next, the meeting attendees viewed the 11 min. Attorney General's presentation on Tuesday, January 25, 2011, of the white paper that came out of the Symposium held last August about water quality at the Lake of the Ozarks. Recommendation number one was stated thusly:

"Because the greatest threat to long-term water quality at the Lake of the Ozarks comes from thousands of aging and poorly maintained on-site sewage disposal systems, the commissions of Camden, Miller, Morgan, and Benton counties should move forward with the formation of a regional sewer district."

Jim Rogers then stated that these recommendations in the white pages from the symposium can be a tool that local leaders can use to start making efforts to protect the lake water quality today and protect this valuable resource for future generations.

Regionalization: The purpose of this meeting is to discuss regionalization. Recommendation #1 in the white paper is to form a regional sewer district that includes all 4 counties. To view and download the Attorney General's report go to:

www.ago.mo.gov

Jim Rogers and Warren Witt will be the communication between committees and commissioners. The Attorney General's recommendations (and particularly recommendation #1 from the white paper) have driven this task force to become clearly a commission-driven task force. Jim and Warren can function, in part, as a liaison with sub-committees and the County Commissioners. The purpose of today's meeting is to set

up the subcommittees for the task force, and one of the first tasks is to establish what is going to be the regional sewer district. This district will be determined so that any sewer system that could possibly pollute the lake will be a part of this regional district.

Warren Witt then said that the purpose of this task force has changed somewhat from the first couple of meetings. We didn't have an Attorney General's report on the Symposium before. The 4 county commissions have changed from looking at the task force and wondering what direction it will take, to being recommended by the Attorney General to pursuing establishing a 4-county regionalized sewer district. The AG report requests that the formation of a 4-county sewer district for the entire Lake come from the county commissions. The white paper from the Symposium goes on to state that we need either a common sewer district or a reorganized sewer district. The AG recommended reorganization. Jim Rogers and I have copied off the 7 pages or so that include a discussion of recommendation #1 about a regional sewer district for the entire lake and we will hand these around the group to be shared. The pages we copied were pages 11-17 and these were a thorough discussion of recommendation #1, some of the statutory mechanisms that exist right now, and a discussion of the differences between a "reorganized common sewer district" and a "common sewer district".

But, according to the AG white paper from the Symposium, this will be up to the commissioners. This task force is looking toward the commissioners to let us know how they need us to proceed. It is up to the county commissioners. Ameren Missouri has a passion for establishing a 4 county sewer district, but if members here today have someone else that could deliver what you need, then Jim and I can step aside. We're going to follow the AG recommendations and work toward a four county wastewater task force, through the offices of the 4 county commissions.

Next, the group began the process of forming the committees for the task force. First ideas for committees were brainstormed, keeping in mind that the committees, at this point, were going to be fact-finding committees for the county commissions to use.

Brainstorming committee suggestions:

Public Relations / Education

Finance Committee

Boundary

On-Site Management

State Legislation Liaison

Test Data for each of Individual County

House Count/Costs

Governance

Technical Committee / tech standards known and adhered to systems

Technology

Permitting

Sources – and public beaches

Committee for each of the separate counties

Real Estate
Private sector solutions
Sources – especially at public beaches
Integration with existing systems

Then brainstorming ended and a discussion on the different suggestions began. Working with the discussion, a list beginning to group and organize the committee choices was started.

Beginning of a sorted and organized list for committees:

House count
Finance – costs – funding
Liaison with AGO and Legislators
Boundary
Test data/sources/science
Nature of the problem – PR/Education to promote facts and deal with the perception issues that presently exist.

In part of the discussion, a question was asked to the county commissioners (or their representatives) who were present: Do the commissioners have things that they would like to see brought?

Kris Franken: I would like to see exploring private sector solutions. Everyone wants sales tax/property tax, but there are private sector solutions. We are funded by the USDA. Private sectors can get construction cheaper. There is a responsibility that goes with the job. Lines need to be set properly. You need to have a little control over the rates so you don't have to worry about rates becoming an issue. It all needs to be justified financially. A possibility is using sewers already existing and expanding them. They are not using near all of their capacity. I would entertain the idea going that way. My pet peeve is, "If the state of Missouri is really concerned about our water problem down here then why does it take two years to get a permit for wastewater discharge? The app (application) is a one page calculation that should be able to be reviewed in 15 minutes. Permits are held up everyday. As an installer I have to deal with, what you are looking at, 15 to 24 months to get a construction permit? If we can't get past those kinds of hurdles, there is no way to accomplish this.

There are four plants on the Westside of the lake and more all around the lake, and most are hardly using their capacity. So, we have the option of using existing plants.

Question: Public Relations and Education: Is that an important item for this group to spend our resources on before it goes to the commission?

Kris: I have been involved with a lot of planning processes. You are always going to have to have education. Make sure it is listed as something that will be a part of the program. May not need it at this point.

The AG's report mentioned finding sources. We need a science oriented committee to get a grip on the actual number of occupancy. A committee that pursues this recommendation is number two. Might have the University Extension do the work.

Donna Swall: Bob Broz, with MU Ext said that it might be faster to write a mini grant for the count to take place. One start would be identifying properties and homes that have septic systems put in before 1996.

Tracy Rank Benton County Health: The Health Department should know these facts. The permitting is done through the county health department. They have the figures. Missouri University Extension service doesn't have this information. The numbers can come from the health department or waste water management. Morgan and Miller County Health Departments can help too. The only way to find these numbers is to put feet on ground and knock door to door. Those numbers will never be accurate because they will be ever changing. In the meantime the systems fail. We have them as a grandfathered system. The numbers will never be 100% accurate unless it can be done quickly.

Mayor Lyons: The public beaches are being closed by MDNR and they are not even looking at the source of pollution. This hurts our tourism. He (AG) needs to correct his own house situation. People assume the entire lake is polluted when they read their reports. It's a state problem.

We need a political liaison committee with the AG office.

Could we summarize by saying we need to build an awareness of what the source of the E. coli is?

A houses with septic count could be done another way, through the Assessors office

Kris Franken: We need to identify the construction date, then sort everything that was built prior to 96 and leverage that against permitted systems that have been installed.

Joe Roeger: We need a tracking system to tell where the E. coli is coming from, agriculture? sewers?

We then form the committees and get the boundaries set up. We need to test data/sources with science. What if we spend millions of dollars on sewer and still have a bacteria problem at the lake. We need to be sure where it's coming from or a lot of people will be upset.

Jim Rogers: How do you test those systems that are part time? And, when those become full-time systems, how do we know which ones will fail?

Joe Roeger: A lot of second homes are torn down when people move into them full-time and some homes are also remodeled.

AG Koster mentioned that Ameren has been testing for several years. We should have some baseline data. Is that correct? Are the levels high? Low? Are we trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist?

Warren Witt: My intent with this task force is to limit ourselves to recommendation one. We started this before the AG put out his report based on the need for a 4 county wastewater district. People from outside the lake are for it and are trying to push us into it. The recommendation was to evaluate whether we want to pursue this district. It was not my intent to answer all 12 of the AG's white paper recommendations. County commissioners have not met to discuss who is going to pick up this. LOWA LILs, which are low impact landscaping around the Lake, is well on the way to making a reduction in pollution reaching the Lake happen from a whole different perspective.

I don't believe we should limit this task force to regionalization and look at all 12 recommendations before we go to recommendation one. We should limit our efforts to the piece that needs to be done in order for it to go before the commissions. And then if they say go forward, we take to a vote before the people.

Tom Wright: The commissioners are meeting next week for a state meeting. No one is against keeping our lake clean, but we, the commissioners, need direction. We need to talk about what we want presented to us. We have two new commissioners. I think we got the cart before the horse, here. We need to have a better idea of the recommendation. I feel put on the spot here. I don't like shooting in the dark. The task force is the cart before the horse. .

Roger Corbin: Sounds like we don't understand the nature of the problem, which is, What is the source? We need to understand the nature of the problem. Sewer systems are very expensive. We need to do some careful thinking about this.

Warren Witt (Ameren Missouri): We have been studying E. coli with volunteers that date back to the 60's. The fact is, this lake is cleaner today than it has been in 60 years, but we are entering a time of stricter EPA regulations. Even though the Lake is cleaner, today's standards are higher than they were 60 years ago, and the Lake is not presently meeting present standards. Being cleaner is good news but simply being cleaner does not get businesses to do business here at the lake. Someone will always find a piece of data that will fail. You can do all the advertising and marketing you want, but unless you educate the public as to what the E. coli readings really mean, the marketing will fail. Also, because the Lake is not presently meeting today's standards, unless we act now to begin the process of addressing this issue, EPA could step in and mandate new, stricter and costly regulations.

Cost is an issue. Camden County passed a new ordinance recently that you have to bring your septic up to snuff before you sell your property. This could cost \$300 million. Could we put in a regional sewer system in for \$300 million? No, but there are some already there. We could pull them together and have 75 % of the lake covered. We have already spent a lot. Obviously we should spend in the most cost effective areas. The expensive areas were left out in the planning for building the systems that exist today. The problem

is not going away. We can't just ignore it. But, we can give the commissioners time to talk about this. Someone needs to do something with this or we are likely to fail in the eyes of the public. The tourists want to know that the people of the Lake area care about the Lake and are taking actions to keep the Lake clean and healthy.

Donna Swall: We need real numbers for projected population growth. What percent will fill up? We know that a certain number of homes are second homes and investment homes and a certain percentage have changed in the last five years.

We who live here at the Lake are passionate about the water and we know it's healthy. If we are always in a certain mode of motion of doing something it will be the perception of St. Louis, KC, and Chicago that the Lake is being taken care of. We have 40 years of study on our website. Tom Wright is right - the commissioners need to get together. We need to be perceived of at least working towards a positive direction and trying to discover a solution. Right now, LOWA is hoping DNR and EPA will approve a large 319 Watershed Protection grant. And, we need some serious water studies to find out whether these sewers are leaching into the lake.

LOWA is also going to be promoting their LOWA LILs (LILs = Low Impact Landscapes) Project in partnership with the Lake Area Chapters of Missouri Master Gardeners and Missouri Master Naturalists. Our LOWA LILs program is a way for each of the homeowners to take action now and do something themselves on their own property to keep storm water runoff from reaching the Lake.

All of you very important people and you have taken your very valuable time to come here today. This is a huge step in a positive direction. Thank you for coming to the meeting.

Let's let the commissioners get together and decide what information they need. Then they can get in touch with LOWA and give us direction so that we can form the right committees necessary for finding the facts needed to make the right decisions.

The County Health Departments have the information to count the pre 1996 Septics. Jennifer Eblen, Camden County Waste Water, is going to count Camden County's old septics and she will contact the other counties to do the same.

The next meeting will be at 1p.m., Friday, March 4, at the same place in the Fire Training Building, off 5-32 in Sunrise Beach.

Meeting Adjourned