

It may say flushable, but it isn't! That is the word from Michelle Molina, Operations Manager of the Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan Wastewater Commission's Water Pollution Control Facility. That was one of the key takeaways from the September 12 presentation to the Springfield City Club by her and Todd Miller, an Environmental Management Analyst. Every week, she said, plant staff take a large truck to the landfill filled with wipes and similar items that get stuck in the plant's headworks, forming a mesh that covers the entry to the treatment system.

There is no standard for what is "flushable," she said, and all these wipes gum up the treatment plant, do not deteriorate, and must be manually removed. "You can't even water jet them," she said.



Figure 1 Water Pollution Control Facility Diagram

The headworks is the entry point to an extensive treatment

train(see Figure 1), that includes aeration to remove odor, and digestion by bacteria to remove solids, followed by disinfection using sodium hypochlorite in lieu of dangerous chlorine gas, before the resulting water is discharged into the Willamette. The plant also has a tertiary treatment system but does not need to use it because the first two stages of treatment leave the water adequately treated.

Mr. Miller described the history of the current plant, which replaced two separate plants operated by the cities of Springfield and Eugene, in 1984. The two cities were fortunate because after the Clean Water Act was adopted in 1972, federal funding for treatment facilities became available. While the two cities would have had to fund the full cost if they repaired the existing separate plants, the federal



government would pay 80 percent of the cost of a regional plant.

Both cities concurred that the solution was obvious. Now, the regional system, shown in Figure 2, includes the plan and an extensive system of pipes which collect sewage from the two cities local sewer pipes and convey it to the plant for treatment.

The regional system is a unique partnership formed by the City of Springfield, the City of Eugene and Lane County. It has no employees of its own. It uses about 77 employees of the City of Eugene to operate the treatment plant, and about a dozen employees of the City of Springfield to manage the administration of the system and its large capital program.

The system is funded by sewer fees imposed on residents of the two cities. These fees cover 90 percent of system costs, with Systems development charges making up 6 percent. Regional spending is primarily for capital investments in maintain the \$450 million in assets. Capital spending and debt service make up almost 60 percent of spending while 30 percent is in system operations and 9 percent in administration.

