

# Discussion Paper on NCC Southern Sewer Expansion

(Updated 3/30/04)

## *Background and SNCCA Perspective*

This paper has been developed to help sort through the maze of numbers and information regarding the need, or lack of need, for the NCC Southern Sewer Expansion Project. It has been clearly documented that this system is very marginally justified due to the loss of customers caused by annexation. If constructed, this system will require significant subsidies from Countywide sewer rate increases. As a result, it is vital that a thorough examination of the need be revisited.

It should be stated up front, that the SNCCA is NOT anti-growth or anti-waste water treatment. Our membership simply requests that growth occurs at a reasonable rate and that it be managed to target the projected housing needs. We also believe that large publicly funded capital projects should limit their planning period to 25 years. With sewer, many options and new technology may arise in the next 25 years. As such, planning beyond this period is too speculative and could lead to excessive wasteful spending. In addition, SNCCA members strongly support growth in concentric rings around our existing towns to make them centers of commerce and social interaction. Therefore, infrastructure and less stringent land use regulations may be appropriate in SNCC towns, but not in the unincorporated rural areas where we prefer to have development delayed to allow additional time to promote land protection through fee simple acquisition, agricultural preservation, and conservation easements.

## *SNCC Projected Growth Need and Sewer Service Capacity*

The Delaware Population Consortium has projected a need for 15,936 new homes from 2000 to 2030 for SNCC (MOT Planning District). We in SNCC agree that this projected housing growth needs to occur primarily with sewer service, but fear that the current plans for excessive sewer will seriously over stimulate growth and result in significantly more homes than needed.

### Some Facts and/or Assumptions for Discussion that should be Confirmed or Refuted.

- Middletown has sewer expansion capacity to 3.3 Million Gallons/day (MGD), however, 0.5 MGD is under an agreement for treatment at Water Farm 1. This results in a total new increase in regional wastewater treatment of 2.7 MGD. At 250 gallons per house, this provides sewer service for **10,800 new homes minus some capacity required for commercial and school uses.**

- The existing MOT wastewater facility (water farm 1) has an operational capacity of 1.1 MGD (original design for 1.7 MGD; limited by design & operational problems). This can meet the need for 4,400 homes. Most of this was allocated prior to 2000. However, with additional spray irrigation fields, the capacity could be increased by 1.4 MGD that would provide treatment for an additional **5,600 new homes minus some capacity for commercial and school uses**. The Odessa National Record Plan has a clause to allow spray irrigation that should be exercised. Additional funding should be used to purchase additional farmland for spray irrigation over expansion of SSSA at water farm 2. (Please obtain and read "Wastewater Management Facility Plan for SSSA, October 2003, New Castle County Department of Special Services.) In addition, if some spray irrigation can be done on the Southern portion of Odessa national (South of Fieldsboro Road), and land can be purchased and utilized in this area or slightly more south, it may lessen the challenges of meeting the TMDL requirements. These areas are actually in the relatively undeveloped Blackbird Watershed that is targeted for protection as "green infrastructure". The natural area may be able to provide valuable green infrastructure services to assimilate nutrients from spray irrigation due to less of the systems carrying capacity for pollutants being strained by development.
- Smyrna, with annexation of land and cooperation from Kent County, could provide treatment for an additional **2000-3000 new homes**, dependent on the size of the final annexation.
- Based on annual trends over the past few years, we can expect over 50 homes per year on septic in the Suburban Reserve area, providing septic waste water treatment for **over 1,300 homes** by 2030 that should be subtracted from projected housing need to determine new homes needing central waste water treatment. Due to conservation design and smaller lots, this number may increase due to the creation of a niche real estate market for larger "estate" lots of 5 acres and/or due to the conservation options for 1-acre lots with 60% open space in SR.

In summary, regional wastewater capacity is sufficient to meet the projected housing need to 2030. This requires improvements to WWF1, intergovernmental cooperation between Middletown, approval of the full Smyrna Annexation and assistance for sewer by Kent County. This provides wastewater treatment (sewer) capacity **for 21,400 to 22,400 new homes**. We can expect at least 1,300 homes on septic regardless of treatment capacity. **As such, the wastewater needs for SNCC can be readily met without the financially marginal construction of Southern Sewer Service Expansion (Water Farm 2).** This would also better balance the sewer capacity supply and demand and will not over stimulate growth in the region. **THIS WOULD ALSO HELP REDUCE THE VERY LARGE SEWER RATE INCREASE THAT WILL BE NEEDED TO HELP SUBSIDIZE THIS UNNECESSARY SYSTEM IN SOUTHERN NEW CASTLE COUNTY.**

## ***Current Plans for Southern Sewer Service Expansion?***

- Although NCC has publicly stated that they are "building a smaller system", we have learned from recent documents and financial plan updates we reviewed as part of our FOIA request efforts that the first phase will still construct the same "Core" as originally envisioned and capable of supporting a build out to 8 MGD capacity.
- It will cost 57 Million (just over 1/2 the full system cost) to provide "phase one" capacity for 4,000 homes.
- This 8 MGD will add future build-out capacity to SNCC for an **additional 32,000 homes, above the 21,400 described above.** (Please obtain and read "Wastewater Management Facility Plan for SSSA, October 2003, New Castle County Department of Special Services.)
- **This means that plans are underway for sewer capacity for about 47,500 homes in SNCC. THIS IS MORE THAN THREE (3) TIMES AS MUCH CAPACITY AS THE PROJECTED 2030 NEED FOR NEW HOMES ON SEWER WHICH IS FOR 15, 936 Homes.**

PLEASE SCRUTINIZE THESE NUMBERS AND EITHER CONFIRM OR REFUTE THEM USING DOCUMENTED INFORMATION, NOT BASED ON CASUAL DISCUSSION OR HEARSAY. AS LEANNE WALLING SAID AT THE COUNTY COUNCIL HEARING ON SEWER, IF YOU BUILD IT THEY WILL COME. ABOUT 3.55 TIMES MORE DEVELOPMENT AS NEEDED MAY BE COMING TO SNCC, SUBSIDIZED BY SEWER RATE PAYERS COUNTY WIDE.

If you cannot definitively refute these numbers, please save countywide sewer rate payers millions of dollars and help us protect SNCC from over development by opposing this government pork project that will irreversibly damage the quality of life in SNCC.



## **Southern New Castle County Alliance**

*The Southern New Castle County Alliance is the civic umbrella organization for one of the most rapidly growing areas in the County. The Alliance keeps its membership and the general public advised of various quality of life issues within the region. The Alliance also assists communities with advocacy efforts to protect the quality of life for SNCC residents.*

# Preliminary SNCC Wastewater and Housing Need Summary

Summary Analysis by the SNCCA has been Compiled for Discussion Purposes Help Clarify the Facts and Understand the Issues

	New Households or DUs	Wastewater Capacity or Buildout (GPD)	New Households or DUs Served
<b>Delaware Population Consortium 2030 New H/H for MOT</b>	<b>15,936</b>		
Middletown W/W Buildout Capacity			
New Capacity		2,700,000	10,800
NCC Agreement Capacity		500,000	2,000
Waterfarm 1 WW Capacity			
Current w/Operational Problems		1,100,000	4,400
Addition w/ Operation Problems Solved (more Spray fields)		600,000	2,400
With WWF1 Buildout Expansion to 2.5 MGD		800,000	3,200
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>5,700,000</b>	<b>22,800</b>
Subtract 0.5 MGD Middletown Commitment		(500,000)	(2,000)
Subtract estimated 1.1 MGD Pre-2000 Commitment		(1,100,000)	(4,400)
<b>New Sewer Capacity From Middletown &amp; NCC</b>		<b>4,100,000</b>	<b>16,400</b>
Add Sewer Capacity for 2000 homes from Kent County (Smyrna)		<u>500,000</u>	<u>2,000</u>
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>4,600,000</b>	<b>18,400</b>
Number Homes on Septic (30 years at 50/year)		<u>375,000</u>	<u>1,500</u>
<b>Potential Homes with Wastewater Treatment without WWF2</b>		<b>4,975,000</b>	<b>19,900</b>
NOTE: Must have some WW allocation for Commercial & Schools			
<b>Excess Over DPC 2030 Housing Need Projection</b>			<b>3,964</b>
WWF2 Phase One		<u>1,275,000</u>	5,100
NOTE: Must have some WW allocation for Commercial & Schools			
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>6,250,000</b>	<b>28,964</b>
WWF2 with Additional capacity to full buildout to 8.3 MGD		<u>7,025,000</u>	<u>28,100</u>
<b>Total Sewer Capacity Planned for SNCC</b>		<b>13,275,000</b>	<b>57,064</b>
<b>Excess Over DPC 2030 Housing Need Projection</b>			<b>41,128</b>

Please Note that at an estimated 250 GPD per Dwelling Unit, the 2030 projected 15,936 new homes for the M-O-T planning district require ONLY 3,984,000 MGD of Wastewater Capacity plus some smaller amount for commercial and school uses.