

CENTRAL BASIN SEWER STUDY



WHY DISCUSS SANITARY SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE IN OCONEE COUNTY?

Sanitary sewer service is a significant public investment that can determine where and how Oconee County will develop and grow for years to come. With big decisions ahead, major sewer projects require thoughtful conversations weighing costs and benefits to ensure all factors are considered. Decision makers must address the following when determining where to invest:

- Current infrastructure needs
- Location of future growth areas
- Environmental concerns
- Economic development goals
- Population growth potential
- Commercial and industrial needs
- Feasibility of sewer by location
- Cost for installation and maintenance
- Cost/benefit for both the sewer provider and customers

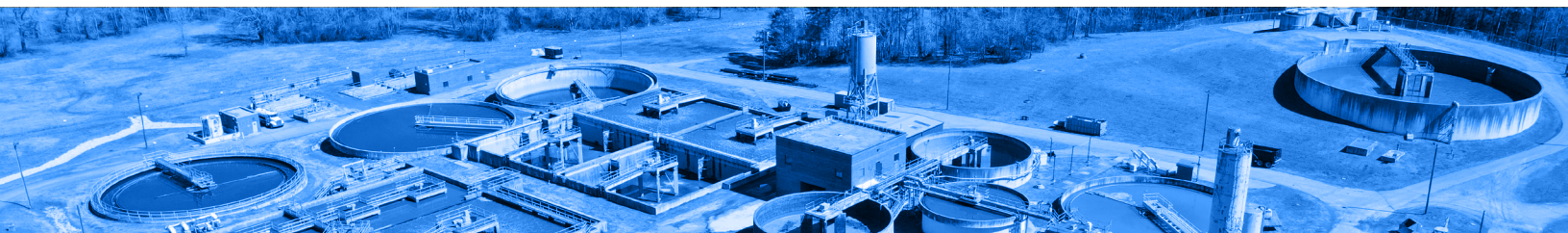
WHY TALK ABOUT IT NOW?

Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority (OJRSA) is the only public wastewater treatment provider in Oconee County, South Carolina. Seneca, Walhalla, Westminster, and West Union each have their own municipal collection systems, pump stations, and force mains. Oconee County owns the pump station and force main at Golden Corner Commerce Park. All the individual collection systems and pump stations connect to the OJRSA system and are conveyed to the Coneross Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility.

OJRSA, as successor in interest to the Oconee County Sewer Commission (originally established by ordinance No. 78-2 dated February 28, 1978), and the prior owner of the Coneross Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, was established by its three member-municipalities: Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster under South Carolina law to provide sewer treatment services on a regional basis.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF A PUBLIC SEWER

- The presence of public sewer can lead to considerable increases in property value, as it can significantly increase the potential scale and value of site development.
- Areas being served by sewer can help attract new residential and commercial/industrial investment.
- Public sewer provides environmental benefits by replacing septic systems that are failing and in areas with poor soil drainage.
- By avoiding the need for new septic tanks and removing existing aging septic tanks, both ground water and surface water can be better protected, which in turn helps protect drinking water systems and bodies of water that provide recreational benefit to residents and visitors.
- Publicly owned sewer systems are permitted and must meet stringent federal/state requirements that might not apply to existing private systems.
- Publicly owned sewers may allow for new connections to be added in the future, which if planned thoughtfully, can help with growth demands in the area.



💰 COSTS AND LIMITATIONS OF PUBLIC SEWER

- All types of wastewater solutions (private/public, septic systems, and sewer systems) require maintenance. If wastewater systems are not properly maintained, failures can lead to the release of raw sewage into our environment, potentially affecting natural resources.
- Septic systems - which are found throughout Oconee County- will continue to be a good solution for handling wastewater in certain areas. Infrastructure costs need to be considered. For example, extending public sewer long distances or to only serve a small number of properties over a large area may not be cost effective.
- Future growth planning may dictate larger infrastructure than initially required. While development is happening, oversized pipes, pumps, etc. may require more maintenance or an interim solution until more growth occurs.
- Topography may influence the ability for sewer to be installed cost-effectively in certain areas, since additional infrastructure may be needed to serve lower lying areas for proper drainage.
- Access to public sewer will make more properties developable. Getting a permit for a septic tank on your property is not a guarantee. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) looks at several factors such as soil type, slope, house size, and proximity to private wells when determining if a permit can be issued for a new septic system.

💰 LET'S TALK ABOUT COST IMPLICATIONS!

	Public Sewer	Private Sewer (package plant)	Septic Systems
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly service charges • System maintenance costs are shared among the sewer service area customers • Rates are subject to change by the sewer authority • Connection costs can be expensive, especially in rural areas* • Maintenance of the connecting line to the main line is typically the property owner's responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly service charges/ assessments – varies by Homeowners Association (HOA) • Often more expensive due to economy of scale • Private collection system and Wastewater treatment facility • Permit required from State/ Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) • Requires contract with or hiring of operations and maintenance staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation, maintenance, and cleaning costs are all paid for by the owner • A new system is very costly and requires excavation and adequate space -septic requires replacement every 15-40 years • Septic systems require maintenance – the cost of which lands on the individual property owner

*See updated policy language on next page

🌱 LET'S TALK ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS!

	Public Sewer	Private Sewer (package plant)	Septic Systems
Environmental Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a safe place to discharge the treated wastewater where it won't negatively affect recreational activities and/or drinking water supply. Discharge is governed by NPDES permit. • Chemicals are required in the treatment process which can be harmful to the environment. All chemicals are governed by the NPDES permit and must meet all permit requirements. • The wastewater treatment process also requires a lot of energy. • Minimal maintenance is required, and regular maintenance can be done without excavating. • Public sewer can provide environmental benefits by replacing septic systems that are failing and in areas with poor soil drainage. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of wastewater leaching into private wells and/or groundwater supply. • Septic systems cannot be located near lakes and rivers because they require soils to properly clean the wastewater. • Septic systems cannot be located on certain properties due to slope, soil types or space limitations.

! IMPORTANT! UPDATED REGULATION

Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority Sewer Use Regulation Section 3.5 C and D states: *“C. The Owner of all houses, buildings, or properties used for human occupancy, employment, recreation, or other purposes, abutting on any street, alley, or right-of-way in which there is a public sanitary sewer, is hereby required at the expense of the Owner to install suitable toilet facilities therein, and to connect such facilities directly with the public sewer in accordance with the provisions of these Regulations. Under unusual or specific circumstances, the Director may waive this provision. This requirement shall not apply to any of the above-described properties that, as of the date this Regulation is adopted, are utilizing a septic system permitted by SCDHEC in compliance with S.C. Regulation 61-56. Such properties may continue to utilize their existing septic systems until and unless SCDHEC requires those properties to connect to public sewer pursuant to S.C. Regulation 61-56.*

D. Exceptions

- 1. Force mains shall not be considered accessible and shall not be utilized by any User for direct connection of sewer service.*
- 2. Where annexation or easements to cross adjacent property are required to connect to the wastewater system at the time of application, then sewer shall not be considered accessible. A deed and plat must be on file with the Register of Deeds indicating the parcel(s) located between the property to be developed and the sewer system. The adjacent parcel(s) which must be crossed shall be identifiable by County Tax Map System (TMS) number.”*

Please note, this is a major update to the prior language and allows those properties with a working septic system to delay connection for the lifespan of their septic system unless an exception is applicable.

? QUESTIONS?

Do you have any questions prior to filling out the survey? Please email the project public engagement lead at Katherine.Amidon@bolton-menk.com.

