

## OK Falls sewer plant approval expected soon

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Final funding approval for a \$10.1-million upgrade of the sewage treatment plant in Okanagan Falls could be just a phone call away.

The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen is expected to approve a 20-year loan authorization bylaw for the project at its Aug. 5 meeting. The matter was postponed by the RDOS board last week while awaiting the green light from the provincial government.

RDOS chairman Dan Ashton said Sunday ministry approval is expected shortly.

"We were told it was at the minister's office, but they need to sign off on it," he said. "We can't approve the bylaw until we have ministerial assent."

Since no referendum was held on the project, the province must approved a liquid waste management plan for the OK Falls area before the RDOS can approve its funding bylaws. The project has already received a \$6.25-million grant from the province and \$97,000 a year from the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

The new plant will be located about three kilometres south of OK Falls on a parcel of farmland on the east side of the Okanagan River.

Effluent will be treated by the biological nutrient removal (BNR) process, as is done at many other plants in the Valley, prior to discharge into the Okanagan River channel. However, some irrigation or wetlands enhancement is also being considered.

Andrew Reeder, the regional district's manager of engineering services, said the project is in its final design stage, awaiting funding approval before calling for tenders on construction.

A design committee group, including members of the public, is looking at what the plant will look like and how it will fit in with the community. A public information meeting will likely be held in September to review its physical layout and costs.

Reeder said the plant's capacity will also be large enough to handle possible future expansion to include Kaleden and Skaha Estates.

"While we're building now for the Okanagan Falls community, eventually it will be expandable so that it will be able to accommodate those other groups," he said.

Reeder said such expansion would decrease the per capita operational costs and the new areas would have to "buy in" to share part of the capital costs. Any future expansions would be subject to approval from the communities involved.

The sewer plant is expected to be completed by the spring of 2012.