

SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER



Important News. I think some Newsletters are more important than others. This one is especially important so please take a moment to read through.

Proposed Fee Increase. You may know the expression “when push comes to shove.” Well, push has come to shove on our capital rehabilitation program, and it’s more than likely to affect your sewer fees in 2026. Here’s the story:

The Needs. More than half of our “collection system” dates to the 1970s. That’s the pipes, galvanized connectors to the main sewer line, valves, and septic pump controllers that move the effluent from the septic tanks to our treatment facilities above Bottle Bay Road. For the last three years we’ve been slowly replacing valves, connectors and pump controllers. We found the connectors are defective and leaking. It’s essential to lake protection and our obligations under state regulations to keep making these capital improvements to an old system.



Leaking connector on Bay Drive

The Costs. In July, 2022, the Board adopted Policy 008 to guide our capital expenditures and financial reserve. The policy states we will annually budget our capital depreciation amount for capital improvements, adjusted each year for inflation. In fiscal year 2026, the policy amount for capital rehab is \$60,000.

Savings. Policy 008 requires we maintain a minimum savings reserve equivalent to four-months of operating expense plus one-year of capital rehabilitation expense. For 2026, our savings reserve must be no less than \$130,000. Here’s the “push”: For the last three-years we’ve been spending down our savings to fund the rehabilitation program. Now the “shove”: we’ve spent down our savings to the policy minimum and going forward we have to fund the capital rehabilitation program from current fees.

What This Means. To fund the capital rehab program, the Board is considering a \$10/month increase in the Basic Fee, and a \$5/month increase in the Service Fee. A motion to publish the proposed FY 2026 budget will be discussed at our July 21st meeting, and there will be public hearings on the fee increase and budget proposal at our August 18th meeting.

The Benefit. We will finally be annually funding our depreciation. Past Boards have done a lot to maintain a modern system (new treatment lagoon, land acquisition for irrigation, replacing steel tanks, etc.). Rehabilitating the older collection system is long overdue and functionally necessary. This proposed fee increase will insure we can continue the rehabilitation program at its current level, year-after-year, without increasing fees (other than for inflation).

Join by Zoom. Our meetings are open to the public. You can attend via Zoom. The Zoom invitation is on our website (bottlebaydistrict.org) but I want to personally make sure you have the invitation, so email me at billb@bbsewer.org and I’ll make sure you have the correct invitation.

Board Member Opening. Board member Julie Houske has resigned due to other obligations. The Board thanks her for her service. The Board must now appoint a replacement. If you are interested in an exciting, super-fun, not-lucrative, and much appreciated opportunity to serve your Bottle Bay community, please email our Board Secretary, Steve Shearer at stevenjshearer@gmail.com. You must be a District resident or own real property in the District and be a registered Idaho voter. I'd like to have a victim selected by our August meeting.

Website Volunteer. There's much we want to do with our website, but we don't want to spend a lot of money on it, and all of us are too old to make the needed improvements. So, we're hoping to attract a techy volunteer to work with the Board on website design and maintenance. If you have the skills and are interested, please email me at billb@bbsewer.org, and let's talk.

Historical Note. Last quarter I covered the founding of our sewer district. This quarter the history lesson is on the sewer extension to Sourdough Point. It was controversial to say the least.



In the early 90s, the Board proposed two Local Improvement Districts (LIDs) to improve and expand the District. At the time, the District was designed to serve approximately 160 properties. LID #1 affected property on the east and south sides of the bay. It provided for a new treatment lagoon, pumps and pipes. But it was LID #2 that enraged some property owners. LID #2 extended sewer service on the west side of the bay out to Sourdough Point. The existing Sourdough homeowners below Bottle Bay Road were on individual septic drainfields. Some drainfields were failing and new owners wishing to build were having trouble getting drainfields approved by Panhandle Health District (PHD). The rocky terrain there made siting difficult. The final total assessment for LID #2 was \$502,512.90. Each property was assessed at \$8,868.25, so it was a financial hit, equivalent to \$19,000 in today's dollars.

The proponents of the Sourdough extension, of course, had the support of the PHD and various environmental organizations. Those of us who lived on or visited the bay knew the enormous volume of lake weed was a sign that nitrogen levels were too high and that the west side of the bay was the culprit. The opponents, on the other hand, claimed the discharge was from leaking steel septic tanks and tank replacement was a cheaper option. Some owners of unimproved lots objected to paying for sewer service before they constructed a dwelling. The opponents were somewhat organized, made a lot noise, but failed to gather the necessary 60% of owners objecting to the LID.

On January 25, 1995, the Board approved both LIDs in a total amount of \$1,023,717.94. Bonds were issued and construction went out to bid in April, 1995. The bonds were retired in 2002. With the sewer line extensions, we now have 305 properties with paid hook-ups, 195 of which are presently connected. And, we have a much cleaner bay.

Bill Berg, District President