

HISTORY OF ROGUE VALLEY SEWER SERVICES

In the 1960s one of the most serious problems facing Jackson County was how to deal with human waste. The Jackson County Health Department Director Dr. A. Erin Merkel stated:

Sewage pollution in our county is the number one public health problem. . . .
We are in a constant danger of serious outbreaks of water and sewage borne diseases. . . . Contagious diseases do not respect city limits or any geographical area.

Rising to the challenge were Jackson County Commissioners and the Chamber of Commerce. Study groups were formed, and much was learned.

Studies determined that the sewage systems in Phoenix, Talent, White City, Gold Hill, Central Point, Medford, and Jacksonville were poor with open joints, leakage, and overloading. Raw sewage was allowed to bypass treatment facilities and pumping stations, thereby flowing directly into various creeks at times of a storm or overloading during the fruit processing season. The state advised the City of Medford not to connect any more large commercial industrial buildings after April 1, 1968.

The local chapter of the American Medical Association repeatedly endorsed an area-wide sewage treatment solution. Many doctors were concerned that sewage conditions as they were at the time made the area ready for an epidemic.

In the summer of 1966 the voters approved the creation of Bear Creek Valley Sanitary Authority (BCVSA). Talent, White City, South Bear Creek Sanitary Districts and much of the unincorporated areas combined into BCVSA. Within five years the elected board of directors had hired staff, gained approval from voters for over \$8 million in bonds, and built an interceptor sewer system to serve Talent, Phoenix, Medford, and Central Point.

Another major achievement during the first five years was to gain cooperation of the above-mentioned cities in a regional approach, allowing cities to abandon individual treatment plants in favor of a more modern, up-to-date plant on the Rogue River. This plant not only replaced the older technology and failing systems used by each of the cities and special districts but created a plant that could continue to grow and expand as the region needed additional services. All of the land and the old Camp White Treatment plant had been purchased from the Federal Government for just one dollar. Each of the five agencies had a single vote on the new Regional Committee.

The City of Ashland opted to not join this regional approach so the interceptor from Phoenix to Talent was reduced in size from what had been planned.

Later the city of Jacksonville and the White City Sanitary District joined the region. Jacksonville was given a vote on the committee when they connected in 1980. As a condition of allowing a line to be built by BCVSA to serve Jacksonville, the County Commissioners required that the line be reduced in size. This required the line to be replaced in 2008.

In the mid 1990's, finding that maintaining its own collection and treatment system was not cost-effective, the City of Eagle Point contacted BCVSA to consider connecting to the regional water reclamation facility and to take over the maintenance of their system. In September, 1998, 90% of the city voters and 85% of BCVSA approved the annexation of the City of Eagle Point into BCVSA.

The City of Central Point entered into a similar maintenance agreement with BCVSA in 1996. In January, 2001, 93% of the voters decided to make this arrangement permanent by annexing the City of Central Point into BCVSA.

In order to be more centrally located, in June of 2003 BCVSA moved its offices to 138 W. Vilas Road in Central Point, and the name was changed to Rogue Valley Sewer Services (RVS).

In May of 2005, the city of Jacksonville was voted into the Rogue Valley Sewer Services district by 95% of voters, with the city of Phoenix following in May of 2006 with 96% of voters approving the annexation.

In early 2005, Rogue Valley Sewer Services contracted with the Department of Environmental Quality to manage the Phase II (stormwater quality) Permit for the cities of Phoenix, Talent, Central Point and portions of Jackson County, while each separate agency would be responsible for the quantity of stormwater. Rogue Valley Sewer Services issues the Phase II permits for DEQ and provides outreach and education to contractors and municipalities teaching them best management practices to prevent displaced soil, concrete, and other substances from draining into the local creeks. The Environmental Protection Agency recognized this cooperation and the hard work of our employees in 2008 by naming RVS the best managed storm water quality program in the country.

The Dunn Pump Station receives waste from Jacksonville, west Medford, and much of Central Point, and with the addition of a 2nd pressure main in 2009, the RVS Dunn Pump Station has grown to handle 28.8 million gallons of waste per day.

The Operations and Maintenance Department of RVS routinely completes video inspection of our entire pipe system every 5 years in order to find problems in the pipes before they become health hazards and cleans our entire system every 3 years to prevent blockage in and overflow out of our lines. In doing so, we have been able to keep repair costs down and maintain a lower than average monthly service fee. Our monthly residential service fee in fiscal year 2009-10 of \$13.90 is the lowest in the state.

Rogue Valley Sewer Services has continued to provide sanitary sewer service to areas that would otherwise not receive such service. Many of these areas will someday be a part of existing cities. Other areas in developed neighborhoods farther out may never have received such service.