

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE 6/23/2021 LAMP MEETING

- Q: Is it okay to use composting or other alternative toilets?
- A: Santa Cruz County does not have a formal policy re composting toilets. Permits are not given for composting toilets, but they are not prohibited. Composting toilets can be used but property owners still need to have functioning septic systems.

- Q: Is there a difference between enhanced vs. regular septic system water testing results?
- A: We do not have enough concentration of enhanced systems in one location to see the effect on ambient water quality, but we do have water quality testing results that show a much higher water quality coming out of enhanced systems vs conventional systems.

- Q: Would there be different results if waterless toilets were used and septic systems just received grey water and not black water?
- A: We would expect to see a higher quality effluent without blackwater, including much less nitrate and pathogens.

- Q: What is the proposed sewer system in downtown Boulder Creek?
- A: Many years ago, a sewer system was considered for downtown Boulder Creek, but was deemed to be too expensive. The County is now re-evaluating the feasibility and costs. Sewage would be collected and pumped up Highway 236 to be treated and disposed at the existing wastewater treatment plant at the Boulder Creek Country Club. The feasibility of connecting homes along the Highway 236 corridor is also being considered.

- Q: Does any part of the LAMP replace County Code?
- A: The provisions of the LAMP would be incorporated into County Code Chapter 7.38. The proposed code changes are Appendix A of the LAMP.

- Q: Talk about the new costs & fees proposed: geological, etc
- A: The costs for new systems serving new development are not expected to change significantly as the requirements are not significantly changing. The average costs for system upgrades and repairs will go up as a result of increased use of enhanced treatment systems, additional soil testing, design by a qualified professional instead of a contractor and requirement for geologic review where slopes over 30%.

- Q: Buyers may not be aware when buying a house with a failing system. They may have to pump the tank 2 times a year.
- A: A thorough evaluation of the system will be required at the time of a property transfer, which will inform the buyer of potential problems or limitations. If the

LAMP Meeting Questions & Answers

system is failing, it will need to be fixed. Responsibility for correction will be negotiated between the buyer and seller.

- Q: Will there be options for both vendors & scaling appropriate to size of addition (ADU vs. 2 story 3 bath)
- A: Septic systems are sized based on the number of units and the total number of bedrooms connected to the system.

- Q: If no ordinance is in place and you need to get permits, how do you know what to do?
- A: It is expected that the LAMP standards will go into effect upon adoption by the State Regional Water Quality Control Board, anticipated for October 15, 2021. Presently the State Tier 1 standards are in effect, which are similar or more stringent than the proposed LAMP standards.

- Q: Process takes too long. The LAMP still has to go to Board of Supervisors, Coastal Commission, State board, etc.
- A: The LAMP is expected to take effect on October 15, 2021. The related code upgrades will be completed in 2022.

- Q: If septic inspections at time of sale are being compared to building inspections, are building inspections required prior to property transfer?
- A: Building inspections at time of sale are not required by the County but are typically required by lenders and the real estate community. Inspection of the sewage disposal system at time of sale is currently required in all of the sewer areas of the county.

- Q: If the cost is too expensive people will cheat. Owners should form community septic district.
- A: This alternative is currently being studied by the County for the Boulder Creek area and will be considered for other parts of the county with septic challenges.

- Q: There is not a lot of time to understand the LAMP & compose public feedback.
- A: This process has been going on for over a year and there is considerable interest in getting it completed as soon as possible.

- Q: Please post John Ricker's slides online.
- A: Slides from the 6/23/21 public meeting are available on the Environmental Health web site.

- Q: How is the effect of homeless encampment measured? Maybe pollution is from homeless & not failing septic systems.
- A: It is clear that there are sources of human contamination in the San Lorenzo River well upstream from homeless encampments. Santa Cruz County Environmental Health has conducted ribotyping testing, which shows human-sourced E.coli in Felton and Boulder Creek. Additional genetic testing is being done, as well as

LAMP Meeting Questions & Answers

testing for pharmaceuticals and other sewage indicators that can be found in the River.

- Q: What about prohibition of septic systems within 200 ft of a sewer line? Does the property owner have to pay the full cost of extending the line?
- A: This is a very standard requirement across the state. Often property owners can group together to share the cost of the line, or sometimes a property owner can make arrangements to be paid back if other properties hook up to the line in the future.

- Q: What about climate change? How does that affect research?
- A: LAMP regulations were designed for the worst-case scenario. Even with climate change we would expect periodic wet winters.

- Q: Are there any exceptions to the LAMP standards for CZU properties?
- A: Under current code and the LAMP, rebuilt properties must meet repair standards, or upgrade standards if they are adding more bedrooms. This allows for rebuilding even if a lot is substandard, but septic systems are required to meet repair standards for setbacks from streams, groundwater, etc. Most insurance policies provide funding for meeting new code requirements and that could be applied to the septic improvements.