

## Regional sewage partnership moves forward

### \$10 million state loan to Ridgefield boosts effort to work with B.G., county agencies

By [Ray Legendre](#)

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A “seriously discussed” regional sewer partnership between Ridgefield, Battle Ground and two county agencies took a step toward fruition this past week when the state government provided Ridgefield with a \$10 million loan for a major sewer project.

Ridgefield’s regional sewage trunk line and pump station would connect the city to the Salmon Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, thus making the city more attractive to prospective businesses along the Interstate 5 corridor. The project’s total price is estimated at close to \$40 million, Ridgefield city manager Justin Clary said.

“We have to have sufficient sewer capacity, water capacity, etc., to service growth,” Clary said. “Certainly it’s one of the key things to making (the Discovery Corridor) an employment hub for Southwest Washington.”

Ridgefield’s sewer project, which includes an estimated eight miles of improvements, is integral to it joining an existing partnership that features Battle Ground, Clark County Public Works and Clark Regional Wastewater District, officials said.

Before Ridgefield can be added to the fold, engineers must determine what the proposed pipeline would look like, where it would go and other questions. At least part of the money Ridgefield received will be used toward studies relevant to the project.

A vote on the discussed merger could happen this fall once the investigation is complete.

Sewage agreements like the one discussed in Clark County save money on capital and operating costs, officials said.

“These types of regional sewer partnerships exist all around the Northwest,” said John Peterson, general manager of Clark Regional Wastewater District. “What usually drives them is the economics of scale being able to share in the same infrastructure.”

#### **‘Pool our resources’**

The state’s Public Works Trust Fund provided Ridgefield with the money in the form a low-interest loan. Without the money, the project would not have been possible, Clary said. Exactly how the loan will be repaid hasn’t been determined.

How much money the other entities in the proposed partnership involving Ridgefield would pitch in depends on how much use they received out of that city’s sewer lines.

“Part of it has to do with the facility proposed and how it could serve other areas besides Ridgefield,” said Peter Capell, director of Clark County Public Works. “How that’s paid for is part of the business issues we have to address and resolve.”

He added, “The benefits are less expensive if we pool our resources together than if we go it alone.”

Peterson noted his agency would “certainly pay a portion” of the Ridgefield pipeline’s costs because it would reach an area near the county fairgrounds.

The Salmon Creek plant would be the partnership’s central point. It can handle up to 15 million gallons of water per day; effluent is sent via a buried 6,200-foot-long pipe directly into the Columbia River.

The Ridgefield Wastewater Treatment Facility would continue operations. It can handle a capacity of 700,000 gallons of water per day. It releases clean effluent into Lake River.

The partnership between Battle Ground and the other two agencies services 80,000 people. Over the next 50 years, that number is expected to skyrocket to 250,000.

A reasonable amount of growth in the system would make it unlikely residents would see rate increases, Peterson said.

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