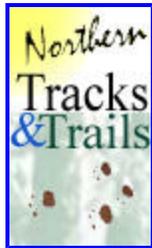


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Treatment plant expansion gets boost

By AARON BROWN
The Daily Tribune

Last Updated: Thursday, January 16th, 2003 08:59:38 AM

HIBBING — A partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers and a corresponding \$325,000 federal grant will aid Hibbing's south wastewater treatment plant expansion.

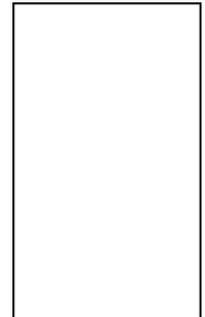
U.S. Rep. Jim Oberstar, D.-Minn., and officials with the Army Corps of Engineers were in Hibbing Wednesday afternoon to sign the agreement with the city. The partnership will fund most of the expense for two large wastewater clarifier tanks. Oberstar advocated the Army Corps of Engineers infrastructure improvement program that delivered these new funds.

Officials said the deal has two primary benefits. They say it will improve the city's water quality and lift a sizeable financial burden off the \$10 million expansion project, already under construction.

"It seemed to me a reasonable extension for the Corps to help small communities with their water supply and treatment," said Oberstar of the federal program he supported in Congress. "At stake is our quality of life, so our hometown communities can grow to encourage businesses to locate and expand here."



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The city is expanding its South Wastewater Treatment Plant to eventually replace its older north plant. Officials hope the new plant will be cleaner and more efficient than the previous facility.

“The actual results are yet to be seen, but the hope is that (the expanded treatment plant) will be more efficient and thus cut costs,” said Mayor Rick Wolff. “The design is to do that.”

Oberstar added, “The city’s goal is cost savings for the taxpayers; the Corps’ role is water quality and protecting our resources of water and land.”

The new plant will solve an immediate problem for the city, but could also play a role in a proposed regional sewer district, a longtime Oberstar project.

“In the long run, this will be part of the regional plant,” said Oberstar. “We’re just beginning the process ... in a very real sense, this helps move the regional plant ahead.”

Wolff echoed Oberstar’s commitment to a regional sewer district.

“This would compliment what we do on a regional plan,” said Wolff, in his first week as Hibbing’s top elected official. “It’s just another step in the process.”

Oberstar said as that project moves forward, additional help through the same program might be possible.

For Corps of Engineers planners, the Hibbing project is part of a national mission to ensure water quality in America’s heartland.

“Protection of Great Lakes water quality is a primary mission of the Corps of Engineers and this project will help to reduce loadings of phosphorus and mercury to Lake Superior,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Magness, the Detroit District Engineer who

was in Hibbing for the signing of the agreement.

The Detroit and St. Paul districts of the Corps of Engineers will oversee the project jointly.

Under Section 569 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1999, the Corps of Engineers was directed to establish a pilot program to provide environmental assistance to non-federal interests in northeastern Minnesota. Projects may include design and construction assistance for water-related environmental infrastructure and resource protection and development projects, including wastewater treatment, water supply and environmental restoration.

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