

Sewer plant upgrade funding authorized

By Mike Hodgson/Associate Editor

A major upgrade of the Southland Wastewater Treatment Plant — the most expensive project ever undertaken by Nipomo Community Services District — could be under construction by July.

NCSD directors, also acting as the board of the district's Public Facilities Corp., approved issuing up to \$10 million in certificates of participation — similar to bonds — to finance the work.

The certificates will be repaid using revenue from sewer service fees paid by customers in the district's Town Division.

“This is the largest debt the district has ever taken on, but it's well-managed debt,” NCSD General Manager Michael LeBrun said, noting the Standard & Poor's financial analysis firm had assigned a AA bond rating to the district's wastewater enterprise account.

LeBrun said if the certificates are issued as scheduled, the district could award a contract June 13, and construction could begin in early July.

If the work goes as planned, the new sewage treatment plant could be online 18 months later.

The first phase will replace the current 900,000-gallon-per-day pond treatment plant with a new plant that will have the same capacity but will use new technology to produce cleaner effluent.

LeBrun said the current plant will continue operating until the new plant is ready to go online. Then effluent in the existing ponds will be fed into the headworks of the new plant for reprocessing.

Once the old basins are empty, the liners will be pulled out and the basins likely filled with soil excavated for two new basins included as a bid alternative.

“That will leave us with a nice flat area where we could possibly locate a photovoltaic array to offset the electrical costs of operating the plant,” LeBrun said. “It would be an ideal location for a photovoltaic intertie.”

NCSD is building the new plant in response to a 2006 notice of violation issued by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board for exceeding limits for biological oxygen demand and total suspended solids in the treated effluent.