

Loon Lake Sewer District #4

3963 Christensen Road
Loon Lake, WA

The following is a summary of notes which were taken at a meeting with Joan Easley, one of the three Commissioners for the Loon Lake Sewer District #4 on June 28, 2017. Joan is a long-standing member of the district and was very knowledgeable on the formation of the district and the process of getting it formed. Brooke Lyons, the District Manager, was in the adjacent room and provided input as needed. Sewer District #4 at Loon Lake encompasses the entire lake with exception of the Granite Point Park community which has a separate system as District #1. Dennis Rewinkel and Rick Odegard were in attendance from Newman Lake.

Loon Lake is located in Stevens County about an hour from Newman Lake on Highway 395 north of Spokane. Loon Lake (1100 acres) is very similar to Newman Lake (1207 acres) with a maximum depth of 105 feet compared to 38 feet at Newman Lake. Loon Lake is spring fed and has a very small watershed, as compared to the Newman Lake watershed of 26,000 acres. The lakes are very similar in that the vast majority of the waterfront is privately owned. Loon Lake has two resorts on the water and a single public boat launch.

Sewer District #4 was formed as a Public Utility District (PUD) under Title 57 *Water-Sewer Districts* of the RCW for Washington State and currently services 793 hookups to their system. It was formed in 1980 and financed primarily through a bond which has just been retired in the last couple years. The district bills their connections quarterly at the rate of \$129.50 or \$43.17 per month. The district has a staff of five with three in Operations and 2 in the Office.

The district was started by a group of homeowners who recognized the need for the sewer system in an effort to clear up the lake. It was not a unanimous decision of everyone and took several years to develop. To get started they performed a feasibility study to look at the options available. They then formed a legal description for the district and had to acquire the petition signatures and show through signed documents that they had community support and easements for the property required for the running of the necessary piping and equipment were available. They then went out to bid and contracted an engineering firm to do the system design and help to organize all of the separate areas/neighborhoods that were formed around the lake. Joan often reminded us that this was a time consuming and frustrating process. A bond was taken out for the construction of the system with a total cost in the area of six million dollars. The type of system they have is referred to as a STEP system (Septic Tank Effluent Pump) with the landowner responsible for providing for the installation of the line from the residence to a conventional septic tank. Solids are retained within the homeowners septic tank with the liquid effluent running to the common system piping and being pumped to one of the lagoons located on the district property. The septic tank becomes the property of the district and is maintained, monitored, and pumped as required by the district. The district has three lagoons, two of which were being cleaned out for the first time since being put in use, this summer. They charge a \$500 connection fee for new connections.

Although the primary financing for the system was through a bond, funding was also received from "Farm Home" funding and the Washington State Department of Ecology. Help was also received from HUD for low income residents to pay for the lines and tank at the residences. Although some of these sources are probably no longer available, finding grant money may still be available but the search and

acquisition may be time consuming and more difficult. Over the life of the district, they have also received some financing through individual homeowners on the lake and 2.1% loan money from Stevens County.

The Loon Lake water level is defined by the Department of Ecology, but as a spring fed lake is set as a constant level for the entire year rather than the curve that is used at Newman Lake to allow for spring runoff and low summer inflow.

Loon Lake has multiple organizations in place to address the needs of their lake community. There is a counterpart independent Water District that provides potable water to the residents of the lake. They also have a Lake Management District which is staffed entirely by volunteers to address invasive plants in the lake. They have had milfoil for many years and have gotten it somewhat under control but have also determined that they have one of the new "hybrid" species in the lake so will have to address that in the future. This group is funded by an assessment of \$50 per parcel for all parcels having legal access to the waterfront. They also have a water quality program that is led by a county resident (Jim Davies) and is entirely staffed with volunteers through the Property Owners Association. The law requires that the county act as the treasure for all of the funded efforts.

The residents of Loon Lake face a very similar set of issues to those we are aware of on Newman Lake. They are trying to figure out how to address the shoreline erosion, that is being caused by the new wake/surf boats and controls for the loud and sometimes obnoxious music coming from the sound systems on some of the newer boats. They have made some gains against the milfoil since they started treating it but with the discovery of hybrid plants will face another challenge. They desire a boat washing station to help in the battle against milfoil and now the threat of mussels, but have the funding issue to figure out. They are very frustrated with the State for their lack of enforcement on the spread of invasive species. Water quality is also an issue with occasional issues with algae but not serious at this time. Joan provided a reference to the leader of the water quality group and felt he would be more than willing to share his information. Joan also pointed out that Loon Lake is listed as a lake of "Statewide Significance" as they used to commercially harvest blocks of winter ice from the lake to serve the needs of Spokane for refrigeration.

Our thanks go to Joan for her time and the sharing of information and the offer to field further questions as they arise and the offer of introductions to the other utility groups at Loon Lake.

Joan also suggested that we contact Twin Lakes, WA (located about an hour northwest of Loon Lake) which she believes has a sewer system but has heard it was quite expensive and when discussing the very small parcels we have at Honeymoon Bay referred us to Deer Lake where they have routed several residences (5) into a common septic tank due to space limitations.

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