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N E W S R E L E A S E

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North Fork Catfish Creek Sanitary Sewer Improvements Project Under Way

Construction to require closing JFK Road south of Pennsylvania

DUBUQUE, Iowa – The City of Dubuque has initiated a major sanitary sewer improvement project designed to eliminate bypass pumping of untreated wastewater into the North Fork of Catfish Creek during significant rain events. The phased project will require temporary closures of some major Dubuque thoroughfares, but the result will be a major improvement in the City's sewer infrastructure.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources issued a construction permit for the City's North Fork Catfish Creek Sanitary Sewer Improvements Project on July 27, 2009. Portzen Construction, the City's contractor for the project, started construction on July 28. The $1 million construction project consists of replacing the existing 12-inch diameter clay sanitary sewer with a 24-inch diameter ductile iron sewer. The project will be funded in part with contributions from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the State of Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

On or around August 10, 2009 construction crews from Portzen Constructionwill close John F. Kennedy Road to all traffic, both north and southbound, near 1675 JFK (Little Caesars Pizza on the west side of JFK) and 1690 JFK (Sherwin-Williams on the east side of JFK). The closure will last for approximately one week. The complete closure is required to install a new sanitary sewer twenty-five feet deep across the road. A detour will be posted. Access to all businesses will be provided.

On or around August 17, 2009 construction of the sewer will proceed north along the westerly most southbound lane. Again, due to the depth of the new sewer, JFK will be closed to all southbound traffic and northbound traffic will be limited to one lane south of Pennsylvania Avenue. This work will take approximately two weeks. A detour will be posted. Access to all businesses will be provided.

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On or around August 31, 2009 Pennsylvania Avenue will be closed to all traffic from JFK to approximately 200 feet to the west to allow for the installation of the new sewer from under Pennsylvania Avenue. A detour will be posted. During this final stage, both northbound and southbound traffic on JFK will be restricted to one lane for approximately one week. This final stage will take approximately three weeks to complete. Access to all businesses will be provided.

During engineering design, the feasibility of trenchless technologies was explored. All were determined either impossible because of the project location or cost prohibitive.

The City is replacing the sanitary sewer to eliminate the need to pump untreated wastewater into the North Fork Catfish Creek during significant rains. For many years, the City has been forced to make the calculated decision to pump wastewater from the sanitary sewer into the creek to prevent wastewater from backing up into homes, prevent private property damage, and the acute health risk associated with wastewater in basements. So the choice has been to either pump wastewater into the creek or let it back up into homes. Unhappy with these two choices, the City of Dubuque spent the last decade proactively seeking out and eliminating the inflow of rain and infiltration of groundwater into the sanitary sewer system. Efforts included:

- Home/building inspections to check for illegal connections to the sewer system;
- Permanent and temporary flow monitoring;
- Smoke and dye testing to identify defects and cross-connections;
- Systematic inspection and rehabilitation/replacement of brick manholes;
- Routinely televising sewers to identify defects;
- Sewer flushing and cleaning as necessary; and
- Reconstruction and rehabilitation (lining) of deficient sewers.

While all of this work has reduced extraneous (rain and groundwater) flow from getting into the sanitary sewer, reduced wastewater treatment costs, and reduced the instances of bypass pumping, it did not eliminate bypass pumping.

Trying to address the problem first by reducing the extraneous flow is the most sustainable option. First, reducing extraneous flow reduces the need for additional chemicals and energy required to treat the extraneous flow. Second, if enough extraneous flow could be removed it could eliminate the need to spend millions to construct a new sewer. And third, the least sustainable thing to do would be to spend millions without solving the problem. Replacing the pipe with a bigger pipe is a logical thing to do. But the sewer system needed to be analyzed to make sure that constructing the new pipe would not just move the problem downstream; create similar problems somewhere else in the system.

In March of 2004, the City funded an evaluation of the North Fork Catfish Creek sanitary sewer. Completed in April of 2005, the study concluded that it was not realistic to eliminate enough of the extraneous (rain and groundwater) flow to solve the problem. It recommended a $1.9 million project to replace the existing 12-inch diameter clay sewer with a 24-inch diameter ductile iron sewer from University Avenue to Key Way and with an 18-inch diameter sewer from Key Way to the NW Arterial. Based on the recommendations of the study, a series of improvement projects were programmed into the City's next five-year capital improvement program budget adopted in March of 2005.

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Citizens can play a significant role in eliminating sanitary sewer overflows and bypass pumping. One known source of extraneous flow is from sump pump and foundation drain discharge directed into the sanitary sewer. Both of these conditions are prohibited by City Ordinance. Upon the inspection of over 7,500 homes, the City found more than 500 sump pumps tied illegally into the sanitary sewer. Owners were required to make the corrections and the City re-inspection the homes to verify that the corrections were made. A few years later, the City re-inspected 118 of the homes and discovered that six were found once again to be illegally connected to the sanitary sewer system. Another way citizens can help is by refraining from dumping cooking oils or grease down their sink drains. Fats, oils, and grease will collect in both the private laterals owned by a property owner and the public sanitary sewer. This can clog the sewers resulting in an overflow. So citizens can help prevent overflows by ensuring that their sump pump or foundation drain discharge is not connected to the sanitary sewer and that they do not dump fats, oils, or grease down the drain.

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