

To: Jeff Kobrock, City Manager and the Gardiner City Council

From: Chuck Applebee, Wastewater and Public Works Director

Date: 1/29/09

**Subject:** Sewer Use Ordinance and Sewer Basement Backups

Approximately ten years ago the City added language to the Sewer Use Ordinance to include the prohibition of rain and ground water sources from entering the Sanitary Sewer.

Title 27 Chapter 5 section 2874 prohibits clean water sources which would include but not be limited to roof down spouts, exterior foundation drains, sump pumps and other surface and ground water sources entering the Sanitary Sewer.

While the Sewer Use Ordinance strictly prohibits rain and ground water connections to be discharged to the Sanitary Sewer the City has worked with willing homeowners towards compliance as well as mandating that new construction have actual physical separations between clean water and sanitary waste.

During the evaluation of the recent upgrades at the wastewater facility as well as Combined Sewer Overflow Master Planning the City Council approved a two prong process to reduce the gallons discharged to the Kennebec River during heavy rains.

Essentially the two plans of attack were:

1. Increase the plant wet weather capacity to transport and treat elevated flows caused by wet weather.
2. Identify and remove clean water sources as part of the comprehensive infrastructure projects.

The reason the City included a transport and treat option was also two fold.

1. The transport and treat method had a cost estimate of 3 million versus the 18 million dollar estimate to identify and remove.
- 2, There are sections of the City that simply do not have a cost effective removal option (the downtown and other low laying areas)

Gardiner has also had a history of two to three basement back ups annually during heavy rainfalls. If there is personnel property damage historically the City has hired a contractor whom works with the homeowner to clean and sanitize the basement/belongings and passed along the expenses to the City's Insurance carrier for coverage.

As a result of the number of heavy rain events this year the City has experienced seven sewer backups. Beyond the heavy rain events a number of other factors also contribute to the reasons why a basement floods such as roots in the sewer line, sags in the sewer line, older sewer lines that have lost their structural integrity.

What has also been recognized by City Staff over time is that the same locations have repeat cellar back-ups.

On the private side many of these back-ups simply would not occur if the plumbing in the cellar was both air tight and didn't have a direct connection to the sanitary sewer for removal of rain and ground water.

With ordinance language that prohibits both rain and ground water disposal to the sanitary sewer and the recent experience on the City's liability insurance it may make sense to be aggressively enforce the ordinance to ensure that private residents cellar drains do not have a connection to the sanitary sewer especially in residents whom have a history of flooding.

The City would work with residents to find acceptable locations for storm water disposal that in most cases would result in cost to both the City and the Resident.

The fix to existing City sewer mains that have been identified as having major issues would be budgeted for repair on an annual basis.