



Biscay Work Benefits Residents, Crow River

July 2015 Snapshots

Through the dedication of the City of Biscay, its residents, and many partners over the past six years, the South Fork of the Crow River and nearby groundwater is now protected through a community wastewater system.

Biscay, located a few miles southeast of Hutchinson, is a small city adjacent to the South Fork of the Crow River. In 2009, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) issued a notice of violation to Biscay due to the discharge of sewage into the Crow River. Like many small communities in rural Minnesota, residents were dealing with significant issues related to treatment of wastewater and were in need of a local, cost-effective solution.



Twenty-nine Biscay homes were connected to the community system.

In response, the City Council spent several years educating themselves and the public about the necessity for proper wastewater treatment and management. The City was awarded a technical assistance grant from the MPCA to begin looking at how to correct the situation. After an exhaustive alternatives analysis, the City found a viable solution.

Properties in Biscay had either their own septic systems, most of which were non-compliant, or a straight pipe discharge to the South Fork of the Crow River. The solution involved the construction and operation of a central community treatment mound into which 29 non-compliant homes in Biscay would connect. In addition, two properties had their septic systems replaced individually instead of connecting to the community system.

Biscay contracted with Wenck Associates to complete planning, design, and construction oversight, including a summary of the problem, consequences of potential solutions, and cost estimates for a community system.

Peter Miller, Wenck Associates Project Manager, said Biscay is similar to many small communities in Minnesota. In fact, a similar project was completed in Meeker County a few years ago for the community of Forest City.

This project was completed in December of 2014 and connected 29 individual septic systems that either were failing to protect groundwater or were imminent threats to public health. The system stops the discharge of 2.5 million gallons a year of raw sewage to the South Fork Crow River, which amounts to an estimated reduction of 795 pounds of nitrogen and 258 pounds of phosphorus per year.



Project dollars came through the Board of Water and Soil Resources (\$440,000 in Clean Water Fund grants), Public Facilities Authority (\$1.5 million in loan and grant funds), and through a low interest loan, which helped offset the Biscay residents' cost of constructing the system.

Miller said the project was a success due to the City Council's persistence and diligence in seeing the project through to the end. "In the face of challenges, they did not panic, but made the necessary decisions at the time to keep the project moving forward. The Midwest Assistance Program, McLeod County, the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority, BWSR, and the MPCA all played a vital, cooperative role in helping Biscay solve their wastewater problem," Miller said.