

June 14, 2018

Dear Kabetogama Township Property Owner,

The majority of existing wastewater infrastructure in our community is at some level of noncompliance.

The Kabetogama Township Board of Supervisors are a partner in the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project. Under the authority of the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board (VNPCWJPB), a comprehensive wastewater plan for the housing, recreational and resort developments in the Park's Namakan and Rainy Lake Basin Areas was completed in 2010. The purpose of the comprehensive Wastewater Plan is to provide an environmentally sensitive and reasonable solution to the problem of noncompliant and failing septic systems within the basin areas. To review the plan in total, go to [www.sehinc.com/online/namakan](http://www.sehinc.com/online/namakan) and open the document labeled Draft Comprehensive Wastewater Plan.

The Board will be hosting 2 informational meetings for lakeshore and near lakeshore property owners to further discuss the Clean Water Plan for Kabetogama. The format for both meetings will be the same so you can attend either one. The dates are **Wednesday July 18** and **Wednesday August 29** at the Kabetogama Town Hall at 7 PM.

You will hear representatives from St. Louis County Environmental Services, SEH Inc. Engineering Consultants, VNPCWJB Board members and the Township Board. They will discuss current sanitary sewer regulations and requirements, the Kabetogama Comprehensive Clean Water Plan assessment, current status of Clean Water improvements within the 2 basins in VNP and the necessity for community engagement in solving our wastewater problems. You will have the opportunity to ask questions.

No matter where you are (or think you are) in the continuum of sewer system conformity on your property, you need to attend one of these meetings. We will be talking about both short and long term strategies to address the improvement of our community wastewater sanitary sewer infrastructure.

See you on July 18 or August 29.

Thank you,

Marlene Tomczak, Board Chair    Larry Kec, Supervisor

John Stegmeir, Supervisor

**Kabetogama Township Clean Water Initiative**  
**Information Sharing Meeting**  
**July 18 and August 29 2018**

**Kabetogama Township's Vision for the Future**

The Kabetogama Township has an economy based primarily on year round tourism and recreation. Therefore, the township will support and encourage growth and development that is compatible with the rural north woods setting of the Kabetogama community. To work towards obtaining balance of commercial businesses, residential homes and recreational opportunities while promoting sustainable use of the forests and Kabetogama Lake.

Kabetogama Township will work in concert with Voyageurs National Park and other government agencies to create a community shaped from the shared vision of all its citizens.

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*Voyageur's National Park (the Park) is the nation's only water-based national park, with more than 84,000 acres of water and 134,000 acres of land. The interconnected waterways of the Park provide an unparalleled opportunity to explore the north woods lake country. Unfortunately, those waters are being negatively affected by human impact such as wastewater from existing developments throughout the region. This water quality degradation threatens the long-term health of the ecosystem and the economic health of the tourism industry upon which the local economy is based. (Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board – Comprehensive Wastewater Plan June 2010)*

Since its inception in 2001, the Kabetogama Township Board has received direction from the community through two Comprehensive Planning processes (2002, 2008). Addressing our community's wastewater infrastructure problems was identified as a high priority.

*Currently the reliance on onsite wastewater systems represents a major impediment for business and development especially when the respect for natural resources is paramount. The focus of this amendment is to identify the priority for establishing economically viable and environmentally sound approaches to the establishment of wastewater systems in the community. The infrastructure improvements must be needed, affordable and merge with the environment – not harm it. Improved wastewater services should be more attractive and more permanent than the current mound systems that are the predominant wastewater treatment choice. Working together as a community to get this done will be necessary since costs to repair, replace and manage this very valuable and resource sensitive environment cannot be done individually in many areas. Therefore, a community plan for more than one area in the Township will help define common groupings that could work together and save time and costs equally. (Kabetogama Comprehensive Plan, July 2008)*

It is the responsibility of each wastewater producing property owner to maintain a sewer system which is in compliance with St. Louis County Ordinances and Minnesota State Rules. Generally, there are three instances where the county would assess the conformity/effectiveness of an individual system after initial permitting and construction:

- An report of failure of a system
- When a property owner applies for a permit to expand an existing dwelling
- When a property is sold

Individual sewage treatment systems have finite life spans (often not more than 20 years). Many years could pass between initial permitting/construction of a system and an inspection by the county. The potential (actuality) of effluent from individual systems reaching our lake (or even our groundwater) is undeniable. The Kabetogama Township Board supports and will continue to promote measures that enhance sustainable wastewater infrastructure for our community.

The Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board (VNPCWJPB) was established in 2008 to provide strategic planning as well as technical and financial support to communities adjacent to VNP as they address their wastewater infrastructure issues. The VNPCWJPB is made up of county commissioners from St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, The Environmental Services Director from each county, representatives from each of the VNP communities (Crane Lake, Ash River, Kabetogama and Island View), Voyageurs National Park and the Minnesota DNR. Facilitation and technical support is provided by the engineering firm SEH. The VNPCWJPB meets monthly.

The VNPCWJPB completed a preliminary planning project in 2010 that provides a feasible strategy for improving and sustaining the water quality within the project area. The planning project is to help the project partners develop a comprehensive wastewater plan for the housing, recreational, and resort developments in the VNP area. The purpose of the Comprehensive Wastewater Plan is to provide an environmentally sensitive and reasonable solution to the problem of non-compliant and failing septic systems within the study area.

#### *VNP Communities take Action*

While VNP communities made some headway working on their own to make progress on their wastewater infrastructure issues, the establishment of the VNPCWJPB greatly accelerated accomplishments.

Crane Lake: Completed the initial phase of their community wastewater system in 2004. Since then they have extended their community collection system and developed a sustainable plan to manage individual sewage treatment systems (ISTS) where connection to the community system is not feasible. Crane Lake now has most properties connected to the community sewer collection and treatment system. They also have a plan to manage ISTS's and replace them as needed for those properties where it is not feasible to be connected to the community system.

Ash River: Preliminary planning for a community collection and treatment system has been completed. A land exchange to secure a parcel to locate the treatment system is in the process.

Funding to begin project engineering has been secured. Project engineering will begin when a Sanitary Sewer District is formed. When Ash River’s project is completed, a majority of properties in the community will be connected to a community sewer system.

Island View: Construction of an extension of the East Koochiching Sanitary Sewer District to connect Island View properties to the community system began in 2017 and will be completed in 2019. With the completion of this system, the majority of properties on the Rainy Lake side of VNP will be connected to a sustainable community wastewater system.

Kabetogama Township 2018: In 2002 the Township Board began working with property owners in the Puck’s Point area on a project to plan and provide for sustainable wastewater infrastructure in that part of the township. A subordinate sewer district was formed in 2006. Construction began on the Puck’s Point Sanitary Sewer System in the Fall of 2016 the system began operating in May, 2017.

Kabetogama Township Moving Forward:

Of the three sister communities in the VNP Namakan basin, Kabetogama Township is the largest wastewater producer. It also contains the most resorts which are typically the largest wastewater producers.

There are approximately 225 wastewater producing lakeshore and near lakeshore properties in the township. 26 are resort properties. In completing the 2010 VNPCWJPB Comprehensive Wastewater Plan, a desktop level assessment was completed for ISTS’s in the township. Based on the desktop level review of the soil information, completed questionnaire forms, and County records, the following Compliance Criteria is created for the project:

	<b>Non-compliant</b>	<b>Probably Non-compliant</b>	<b>May Be Non-compliant</b>	<b>May Be Compliant</b>	<b>No Building</b>	<b>CLWSD</b>	<b>Unsustainable</b>
Age of System	Older than 1980	Between 1980 and 1990	Between 1990 and 2000	Newer than 2000			
Type of System				Mound		Holding Tank, Outhouse, Privy	Holding Tank, Outhouse, Privy
Lot Size	Less than 0.25 Acres	Between 0.25 and 0.50 Acres	Between 0.50 and 0.75 Acres	More than 0.75 Acres			
Shallow Well	Less than 50 feet deep			More than 50 feet deep			
Maintenance	Never			Less than 3 years ago			
Permit	No			Yes			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*According to Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080.1500, systems installed after March 1996 or in a designated shoreland area must have a minimum of 3 feet vertical separation between the system and groundwater or bedrock. If the system is outside of a designated shoreland area and installed before April 1996, this separation is reduced to 2 feet. This requirement means that most systems installed before March 1996 are not*

*compliant because of the prevalence of bedrock and the high local groundwater elevation. (Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board – Comprehensive Wastewater Plan June 2010)*

Based on the Compliance Criteria listed above, **77%** of the ISTS's in the township were inferred to be failing to protect groundwater (either noncompliant, probably noncompliant, may be noncompliant or unsustainable). There have been replacements of systems on properties since this assessment was completed in 2010. There also may be systems which have become non-conforming because of age and or condition since that time. Bottom line: The majority of existing wastewater infrastructure in our community is at some level of noncompliance.

### A Pathway to Clean Water

The *Comprehensive Wastewater Plan Divided the Township* into potential action areas (see attached map). Each of the planning areas is conducive for similar potential wastewater collection and treatment alternatives. These service areas are based on location and density of structures, potential wastewater collection areas, and recommendations of previous reports and findings. The service area boundaries will be modified as potential projects are developed and studied further. Service areas may be combined as they may be better served by creating one treatment site to take advantage of economies of scale and operational efficiencies. The final service area boundaries will depend on many factors including: Topography, condition of existing on-site systems, property owner requests, funding availability and/or type of proposed treatment or collection system. Recommendations were made for each of the delineated areas as to type of system and rated from most in need to least based on the assessment:

Centralized system recommended - by priority: B,H,C,F,J,A,G (B has been completed)

Decentralized systems recommended - by priority: I,E,KR,D

The Township Board is committed to keep moving forward on our clean water initiative. We are in a good place (VNP) and time to take advantage of the opportunities that exist to improve our community's wastewater infrastructure. As the Board worked with the Puck's Point property owners on their project, we discovered a very supportive and engaging network of public and private entities truly interested in helping small communities like ours work toward their clean water goals.

- Collaborative working relationship with county governments and VNP communities: Through the VNPCWJPB, VNP communities are working together to support, plan and secure funding to complete wastewater improvement projects in VNP communities.
- State support for clean water initiatives: The State of Minnesota is a leader in progressive clean water policy and funding initiatives. The kind of projects envisioned by the VNP Clean water Comprehensive plan would not be possible without the availability of grant dollars and assistance from the state. The Puck's

Point community sewer project was over 80% funded with grant dollars including:

- Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy Fund. These grant dollars are received through the VNPCWJPB. The availability of this fund expires in 2034.
- Minnesota Public Facilities Authority. MPFA Provides funding for wastewater project for smaller communities through its Small Communities Wastewater Program in the form of grants and loans.
- IRRRB. The Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board provides grant dollars for community development projects
- Resource Professionals: The Township has a team of resource professionals, both private and public sector, working together with the Township and property owners, to successfully complete a project.

Our community has wastewater infrastructure problems, many of which cannot be solved effectively or economically individually. The Kabetogama Township Board is providing property owners an opportunity to explore the concept of working together to achieve a legacy of clean water in the Kabetogama community and throughout Voyageurs National Park.

We hope to see you at the information sharing meeting.

