



Special Services Area No. 1 solving sanitary sewer problems one step at a time

April 19 2018 4:33 PM

MITCHELL — Madison County Special Services Area No. 1 is taking steps to improve its sanitary sewer system and collecting outstanding service fees.

The SSA 1 is a sanitary sewer district operated by the county and serves approximately 5,000 residential and commercial customers. The district operates on service fees paid by users.

“The improvements in the sewer system solved the problems we saw last year with sewers backing up,” County Board Chairman Kurt Prenzler said.

Prenzler said the payment of delinquent sewer bills is also a welcome development. Until January, several hundred residential and commercial customers owed \$1.5 million in unpaid fees.

Robert Falk, superintendent of SSA 1, said a force main relocation improved the flow of the sanitary sewer system along Illinois Route 111 in Pontoon Beach.

“The sewer passed along Route 111 near the hotels and McDonalds and would bottleneck when there was a heavy rain,” Falk said. “By relocating the force main, the flow was redirected and the issues stopped.”

After heavy rains, district pumps failed and sewage backed up in homes, due to storm water infiltration.

Falk said that with the relocation of the force main the pump stations are now running “normal.”

“Before, when it would rain 4 to 5 inches, the pumps would run for days,” he said. “Now they run for a half hour.”

Since the relocation of the line there has been only one sewer back up complaint filed. According to county records, a complaint filed in February for sewer back up was due to a lift station malfunction and caused \$21,446 in damage.

From December 2016 to May 2017 there were seven claims made against the county, costing more than \$88,000. The claims were paid after it was determined there were pump failures and debris clogging the sewer lines.

County Board member Clint Jones, chair of the Sewer Facilities Committee, said the improvements are working and there is now less havoc for residents.

“The (Sewer Facilities Committee) has been doing things in phases,” Jones said. “It was unacceptable when people got sewage in their basements and the first step was putting new maintenance protocols in place.”

Jones said the second phase was going after delinquent sewer fees. He said Assistant State’s Attorney Deborah Besserman aggressively started going after the scofflaws in January. During the past four months, the district collected more than \$300,000 of old debt.

He said the next phase would be to try to reach agreements with the four water districts that provide service to sewer district customers. The agreement would be if a customer’s water is shut off, service would not resume until sewer fees are paid.

Prenzler applauds the work done in SSA 1.

“They’re making progress one step at a time,” he said.