Planning for permits; radium questions

By Lisa Hatfield

The Oct. 11 meeting of the members of the Tri-Lakes Wastewater Treatment Facility (TLWWTF) Joint Use Committee (JUC) included information about the continuing struggle to meet changing permit limits and questions about how treatment of radium in Monument’s water could affect the facility.

TLWWTF operates as a separate joint venture public utility and is owned in equal one-third shares by Monument Sanitation District (MSD), Palmer Lake Sanitation District (PLSD), and Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District (WWSD).

The three-member JUC acts as the board of the facility and consists of one director from each of the three owner districts’ boards: MSD board Director at Large Rich Strom, president; MSD board Chairman Ed Delaney, vice president; and PLSD board and JUC Secretary/Treasurer Ken Smith. Other board and staff members of the three owner districts also attended, including MSD District Manager Mike Wicklund, PLSD District Manager Becky Orcutt, and WWSD District Manager Jessee Shaffer.

Governmental regulations are a moving target

MSD Environmental Compliance Coordinator Jim Kendrick summarized the results of several governmental regulatory meetings around the state.

Kendrick's summary of the Sept. 19 Water Quality Forum stated that the state continues to set unnecessary and unattainable permit levels on water temperature and nutrient levels for discharger permit holders. And the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was not taking action to correct the situation.

For example, the EPA took no action on Reg. 31.17 TP or total nitrogen (TN) interim values that they did not agree with and could not scientifically defend but will still be enforced in 2022 when Reg. 31, The Basic Standards and Methodologies for Surface Water, takes effect.

Another example was that state Water Quality Control Division Project Engineer Jon Erickson said due to budget constraints, he was not able to provide detailed cost estimates for various technologies available in the future that dischargers might need to meet standards that have not yet been set. Kendrick quoted Erickson as saying, “Every facility will have to do their own studies and make their own decision on what discharger specific variances to ask for and what technologies they will choose. We did not get very far on this in our study.”

However, the deadlines for the new temperature and nutrient limits are getting closer every day.

Relation of the Town of Monument’s drinking water radium to TLWWTF

Wicklund said that the above confusing answers from state and federal officials on future regulations, which make it so difficult for discharge permit holders to plan for funding and make technology decisions, were another reason to work toward developing water reuse systems, with a goal of “zero discharge” of effluent back to the creek and more efficient use of water.

However, he brought up the fact that the town of Monument’s public works water system west of I-25 now has two wells containing Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) in the form of radium (Well 9, and Well 6 that has been shut down, in the mobile home park). See two related Monument Board of Trustees articles on page 1 and 6.

He said that representatives from Forsgren Associates, the town’s consulting engineers who are helping the town make plans to remove radium from the drinking water, have called him twice asking permission to discharge into the MSD