TOWN OF PARADISE
Council Agenda Summary
Date: November 10, 2026

Agenda No. 1( )

ORIGINATED BY: Marc Mattox, Assistant Town Manager, Public Works Director

REVIEWED BY: Jennifer Macarthy, Town Manager

SUBJECT: Paradise Sewer Project Update

COUNCIL ACTION REQUESTED:

1. None, written monthly update only.

Background:

This report is a monthly effort to provide additional opportunity for public engagement on the status and next steps of the Paradise Sewer Project.

Analysis:

Since its incorporation in 1979, the Town of Paradise has sought a centralized wastewater system to address failing septic systems that impact public health, groundwater quality, and economic development. The need for sewer service became even more urgent following the 2018 Camp Fire, when the lack of modern wastewater infrastructure emerged as a major barrier to rebuilding businesses, housing, and community resiliency.

In 2022, the Town secured $30 million in CDBG-DR funds to begin pre-construction work, including environmental review, design, and permitting. To provide technical expertise, HDR was retained as Owner's Agent, and a progressive design-build team was selected to develop a Basis of Design Report. That effort confirmed that a locally managed, phased sewer project was necessary to achieve both affordability and long-term community needs.

In January 2025, the Town Council formed a Sewer Project Ad Hoc Committee to evaluate local treatment and collection alternatives, with strong emphasis on public engagement and cost feasibility. The Committee, working alongside staff, HDR, and the Paradise Irrigation District, conducted community meetings, stakeholder workshops, site tours of other wastewater systems, and a technical alternatives analysis.

In August 2025, the Town Council unanimously voted to concur with the Paradise Sewer Project Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation to direct a revised project description to include hybrid gravity/low-pressure collection system, aerated lagoon wastewater treatment, and percolation/evaporation pond effluent discharge.

Subsurface investigations at potential wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) sites conducted in the spring of 2026 concluded that percolation ponds were not feasible for the Sewer Project. Additional desktop geotechnical evaluations indicated that these conditions were likely to be representative of other potential sites in and around Paradise. As a result, the Town sought to revise the project description to replace the lagoon and pond concept with a membrane bioreactor (MBR) treatment facility and surface water discharge of treated effluent. In June 2026, the Town Council voted to concur with the Paradise Sewer Project Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation to approve that revised project description.

Below is a summary of the main accomplishments in the last month and forecast for key activities in the month ahead:

Main Accomplishments

Continued development of the Financial Analysis of the updated project description.
Ongoing development of the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (EIR).
Continued preliminary design of the Collection System.
Continued preliminary design of the WWTF.
Ongoing evaluation of potential WWTF alternative sites.
Topographic survey of potential WWTF sites.
Updated funding applications to reflect the change in project scope.

Key Activities (One Month Look-Ahead)

Hold the first Sewer Project Standing Committee Meeting on November 5.
Host Project Community Info Day event on November 12.
Continue development of Financial Analysis of the updated project description.
Review Administrative Draft of the Subsequent EIR.
Ongoing preliminary design of Collection System.
Conduct Basis of Design Report Workshop.
Ongoing evaluation of potential WWTF alternative sites.
Ongoing preliminary design of the WWTF.

To help community members understand how current project work relates to future decisions, costs, service areas, and construction, the following key questions and answers will be maintained and updated as the project advances. This information is also available at www.paradisesewer.com.

Paradise Sewer Project Key Questions and Updates

Description of Major Milestone or Key Question	Update or Answer
When is the next opportunity for the public to learn more about the project?	There are two new opportunities for the public to learn more about the project: **Sewer Project Community Info Day** – November 12th Drop by at your convenience to learn more about the project, talk directly with project team members and ask questions. • 12pm – 5pm at Nic's (6256 Skyway, Paradise, CA) • 6pm – 8pm at the Paradise Community Center (877 Nunneley Rd, Paradise, CA) **Sewer Project Standing Committee Meetings** – First Thursdays of the month, 2:30pm at Town Hall and broadcast on YouTube
What sewer project is the Town currently planning?	The Town is planning a local sewer system: a mix of gravity pipes, low-pressure pipes, and force main pipes to collect wastewater, a

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	modern membrane wastewater treatment facility, and a permitted discharge of highly treated effluent water to surface water.
Why has the project approach changed over time?	The Town has continued to test options as better cost, engineering, and site information became available. Sending wastewater to Chico was not financially feasible, and 2026 soil testing showed the originally planned land-disposal ponds would not work reliably in or near Paradise.
What is happening this month?	The project team is advancing the environmental review, preliminary design, financial analysis, funding strategy, and evaluation of possible treatment-facility sites. These steps are needed before the Town can finalize a project, complete final design, obtain permits, and move toward construction.
What does “environmental review” mean?	It is the public process used to study potential effects on water, wildlife, traffic, neighborhoods, cultural resources, and other community concerns. The review will identify the expected impacts of the project and ways to avoid or reduce impacts before final project decisions are made. A draft of the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report with these findings will be available for public review and comment in 2027, prior to final approval.
Has the treatment-facility location been selected?	No. The Town is still evaluating multiple potential sites. A location must work for wastewater flows, treatment and discharge requirements, land availability, environmental constraints, and long-term operations.
Where would sewer service begin?	The first construction phase is expected to focus on serving the downtown area. The final Phase 1 service area will also be shaped by the location selected for the treatment facility and the most efficient way to build and operate the system. The system would be designed so service can expand as additional funding becomes available.
Will every property in Town receive sewer service right away?	No. The first phase will serve the downtown area that can be built with available funding. Other areas may be served in later phases when funding, design, and environmental approvals are secured.
Will property owners be required to connect?	No connection requirement has been established. The Town is evaluating approaches that would help connect enough initial customers for the system to operate efficiently while keeping user costs as low as possible.

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How will homes and businesses connect to the collection system?	Some areas will connect directly to gravity sewer pipes while other lower-lying areas will have a small pump to lift wastewater into the system. This hybrid approach allows pipes to be shallower and reduces construction cost.
How is the Town working to keep sewer service affordable?	Affordability is a central commitment of the Town Council and project team. The Town is pursuing grant funding and other outside resources to reduce the costs that would otherwise be borne by local property owners. As the project advances, the Town will continue refining the financial analysis, seeking funding for additional phases and connections, and evaluating approaches that help make initial service as affordable as possible.
What will the project cost residents?	The Town is refining the financial analysis. Grant funding is being pursued to reduce the amount residents may need to pay; final construction costs, connection costs, and any ongoing service charges are not yet established.
Will properties outside the sewer service area pay for the project?	Properties that do not receive sewer service are not expected to pay additional sewer taxes or fees for sewer service.
When could construction begin?	Phase 1 construction is currently estimated to begin in 2028–2029, subject to completing environmental review, design, permitting, property acquisition, and funding.
Has any sewer infrastructure already been built or installed?	No. Construction of any physical structures for the project cannot begin until environmental review, design, permitting, and property acquisition are completed. Additionally, the final design documents must be approved by the Town Council before a contractor is retained for construction.
How will construction disruption be managed?	If approved, construction plans will include measures to limit impacts, especially near businesses. The Town will evaluate tools such as limits on open trench length, night work where appropriate, and trenchless construction methods.
How can residents stay involved?	Sewer updates are provided monthly to the Town Council and to the monthly Sewer Project Standing Committee, and future environmental-review notices, meetings, and key project decisions will include opportunities for public comment.