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Ground broken for Winterport sewer project

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WINTERPORT, Maine — Federal, state and local officials gathered Thursday to break ground on a \$1.89 million project to build new sewer lines in Winterport to replace century-old ones.

The 6,100 feet of the 100-year-old sewer lines are so corroded that groundwater runs into them. The excess water brings the treatment plant to capacity, causing raw sewage to flow into the Penobscot

Winterport Water District broke ground on a \$1.89 million sewer-system project Thursday, Nov. 12. From left: Maine Department of Environmental Protection Engineering Manager Steve McLaughlin; USDA Rural Development State Director Virginia A. Manuel; Office of Senator Susan M. Collins State Office Representative, Carol Woodcock; Winterport Water District Chairman of the Board of Trustees Steve Long; Congressman Michael H. Michaud; Office of Senator Olympia J. Snowe State Director Gail Kelley; Olver and Associates Engineer Annaleis Hafford.

River.

“This groundbreaking today represents an important investment in public health,” said Democratic Rep. Mike Michaud at the ceremony Thursday. “As a result of this project, partially untreated wastewater will no longer enter the Penobscot River.”

Michaud was joined by state and town representatives, Environmental Protection Agency officials, and the engineers who helped plan the project.

The nearly \$2 million sewer system is being funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The Winterport Water District will have to borrow \$250,000 to invest in the project.

The 300 Winterport residents who pay for sewage services should expect to see an increase in their sewer user fees to help pay off the loan.

“This had to be done,” said Steve Lane, superintendent of Winterport Water District. “The district was under a consent order from the EPA to mitigate sewage overflows from the Penobscot River.”

Annaleis Hafford, a senior process engineer with Olver Associates, the company designing the project, said that although excess sewage disposal into the river is not good practice, Winterport Water District was doing it legally.

“This river is pretty big, so it probably had a minimal impact,” Hafford said.

According to Hafford, the groundwater entering the sewer lines diluted the waste, which helped reduce the environmental impact.

The project, started in October, has created approximately 44 jobs and caused traffic slowdowns. It will shut down for the winter and is expected to be completed by fall 2010.

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