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Sewer Project Steering Committee Compiles Cost Estimates; Funding Mechanism Recommendations to be Presented

UTICA, NY --- The citizen-based Steering Committee of the Oneida County Sewer District Sanitary Sewer Overflow Abatement Project has reached a significant milestone in the 15-community initiative, Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente, Jr. announced today.

“While engineering studies are not complete, enough data has been collected to start identifying the types of repairs needed, where those repairs are located, and the associated preliminary costs within the projected total \$158 million infrastructure repair project,” Picente stated. “Based on the latest data, the Steering Committee has reached a recommendation for funding mechanisms to raise monies in 2010 that will allow the district to undertake the most-needed repairs, and begin to satisfy requirements of the NYS DEC Consent Order.”

The funding recommendations and project work affects infrastructure across 15 area communities. Steering Committee representatives will present findings to the Oneida County Public Works Committee on Tuesday, October 13.

According to Steve Devan, Oneida County Commissioner of Water Quality and Water Pollution Control, the recommendations include additions to the 2010 Sewer District budget, as follows:

1. The addition of \$630,000 in the operating budget to fund district-wide project costs.
2. A consumption-based fee assessed on sewer district users residing in the nine communities tributary to the Sauquoit Creek Pump Station. The fee is expected to raise \$1.2 million to fund a capital project debt service account to begin repairs mandated by the Consent Order.

The Committee has recommended that the \$1.2 million amount be raised from a consumption-based charge of \$1.05 per thousand gallons of water used, per account. This component affects the Villages of: Clayville, New Hartford, New York Mills, Oriskany, Whitesboro, Yorkville; and the Towns of New Hartford, Paris, and Whitestown. The repairs for those nine communities are expected to total approximately \$79.2 million, the preliminary engineering data shows.

A second phase of the project, if needed to further reduce the overflows that go into the Mohawk River from the sewer system, would invest approximately \$79 million more in district-wide repairs and improvements to the system. The additional amount would be required if the initial work at the community-specific repairs does not yield enough improvement to fully satisfy the Consent

Order's requirements for overflow reduction. Preliminary engineering estimates have placed the total costs of needed system repairs at \$158 million at today's costs.

County Executive Picente acknowledged the contributions of volunteer members of the Steering Committee for their time, interest and effort over the last 18 months in arriving at these determinations. "Community involvement at the citizen level has been instrumental to developing an approach to fund repairs in a way that is cognizant of and sensitive to today's economic climate, yet recognizes that the communities have an obligation to make the repairs in satisfaction of the Consent Order. I applaud all the Committee members for their hard work and diligence in the face of this enormous fiscal and engineering community issue.

"As we expected, the cost to comply with the Consent Order is formidable. The County has worked diligently to try to obtain state and federal funding, but we need more support. We urge elected state and federal officials here to bring their influence to bear to get some financial help to offset property-owner costs for these massive infrastructure projects," Picente said.