

CHOOSE MAPLETON'S WASTEWATER FUTURE

WHAT'S THE SITUATION?

The Mapleton Commercial Area Owners Association (MCAOA) provides wastewater services for 22 properties in the unincorporated community of Mapleton. The MCAOA is a 509(a)(2) public charity - a highly unusual status for a wastewater service provider, making it ineligible to receive most state and federal grants and loans needed to replace broken pipes and equipment. Much of MCAOA's infrastructure is currently or at risk of failing, and it is necessary to transition to a different type of organization to allow for public funds to be accessible. The community of Mapleton has two good options for how to provide future sanitary services:

Option 1 - Merge with the Water District to become the Mapleton Water & Sewer District

Option 2 - Form a new Mapleton Sewer District

RECOMMENDATION: Choose Option 1, it has advantages over Option 2

HOWEVER - ADDITIONAL AUTHORIZATION IS REQUIRED

Generally, special districts cannot operate more than one service (e.g.: drinking water and sewer). However, in the aftermath of the 2020 wildfires, the Oregon state legislature authorized existing drinking water districts in fire-impacted areas to also operate sewer services (ORS 265.366). The Blue River Water District became the Blue River Water & Sewer District, and now also operates as a sanitary district.

Lane County has offered to explore petitioning the state legislature in January 2025 for a similar provision to specifically authorize the Mapleton Drinking Water District (MWD) to also operate sanitary services. This would allow MWD to annex MCAOA and operate its sanitary services (option 1). But the Mapleton community must decide whether the County makes this request.

Mapleton Water District Board Members, Mapleton Commercial Area Owners Association Board Members and Clients, and Mapleton community residents...

Do you want Lane County to make this request?

UNDERSTANDING OPTION 1: MERGE WITH MAPLETON WATER DISTRICT

The Mapleton Water District (MWD) may be able to take on MCAOA's role through either 1) ORS code 198.792 authorization to relieve a public health danger or 2) through a legislative carve-out passed during the 2025 state legislature session. The former authorizing option is only viable if a public health emergency is active, such as the unchlorinated discharge into the Siuslaw River.

MWD is a special district and would effectively annex the assets, infrastructure, permit, and operations of MCAOA. MCAOA would then dissolve as a 509(a)(2). This option would require the cooperation and coordination of Lane County and would likely span 6-18 months to complete.

Advantages

- Mapleton residents retain control
- Supports full board membership
- Fastest timeline
- Overhead and staff cost-efficiencies

DISADVANTAGES	STRATEGIES FOR DISADVANTAGES
MWD would assume liabilities and costs for failing infrastructure	Prior to merger, initiate discussions with DEQ/BizOR on CWSRF loan forgiveness for critical infrastructure
Sewer system still needs more clients for financial sustainability	Obtain CWSRF Grant for Master Plan to expand service area
Lack long-term expertise for operations & maintenance	Partner with Rainbow Service Area for expert capacity support

Initial Steps to Get Started

- MCAOA and the Mapleton Water District (MWD) vote to request Lane County petition the Oregon state legislature for carve-out authorization
- Lane County petitions the Oregon state legislature
- Oregon state legislature drafts and passes a resolution authorizing MWD to provide sanitary services.
- MCAOA enters into an MOU with Mapleton Water District (MWD)
- Mapleton Water District applies for a Technical Grant from BizOR for \$20,000 for a Consolidation Feasibility Study
- Mapleton Water District enters into an MOU with the Small Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) for technical assistance throughout the new merger (pay SDAO small consulting fees)
- Request Lane County Board of Commissioners to issue a resolution authorizing MWD's annexation of MCAOA through ORS 198.792

UNDERSTANDING OPTION 2: FORM A MAPLETON SANITARY DISTRICT

A new Mapleton Sanitary District would be formed under ORS codes ORS 450.005 to 450.245. After the new District is formed, MCAOA can transfer its assets, infrastructure, WPCF permit, and operations over. Forming a new special district spans 12-24 months to complete.

Advantages

- Mapleton residents retain control
- Second fastest timeline

DISADVANTAGES	STRATEGIES FOR DISADVANTAGES
New District would take on failing infrastructure	Prior to new District, initiate discussions with DEQ/BizOR on CWSRF loan forgiveness for critical infrastructure
Insufficient client base to operate and maintain/replace infrastructure	Obtain CWSRF Grant for Master Plan to expand service area
Lack of staff or expertise for O&M	Partner with Rainbow Service Area for expert capacity support

Initial Steps to Get Started

- MCAOA enters into an agreement with Lane Council of Governments for support capacity to help prepare for transferring to the new sanitary district
- MCAOA talks with Lane County about initiating the process to form a new sanitary district
- Lane County finances the preparation tasks and, if a new district is formed, then it will pay Lane County back over time under agreed-upon term

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why not merge with a different Sanitary District?

No other Sanitary Districts will willingly take on Mapleton's significant infrastructure costs and liabilities without funds in hand to bring the system back into good working order.

Why not dissolve without another entity to take over?

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality would not allow MCAOA to dissolve without transferring their permit to another entity. Conversely, it is not realistic for

all 22 property owners to plan, design, and install on-site wastewater treatment at the same time.

Why not merge with a yet-to-be-formed Lane County Utility District?

Lane County is in the very early stages of considering forming a county-wide district. Similar initiatives in Clackamas, Benton, and Washington Counties took many years to establish. MCAOA's infrastructure may fail before that.