

RIVERHEAD NEWS-REVIEW

Town, county to use sewer plant to irrigate golf course

by Tim Gannon | 01/05/2015 2:15 PM

It's a project that's been talked about since the 1980s, planned for since 2004, and is anticipated to actually happen something in 2016.

Soon, treated effluent from the Riverhead Sewer Plant will be re-used to irrigate the adjacent Indian Island Golf Course, which is owned by Suffolk County.

The Riverhead Town Board is planning to sign an inter-municipal agreement with the county to allow the town workers to go on the county land and hook into the existing irrigation system on the course, according to town sewer district superintendent Michael Reichel. County officials have already signed the agreement.

The cost of this project is included within the [whole \\$24 million upgrade of the town's sewer system](#), a project that began last April and is expected to be done in 2016, according to Mr. Reichel.

The county contributed just over \$8 million to that project, he said.

"The idea is to reduce nitrogen loading going into the Peconic Estuary in order to have a beneficial reuse next door," Mr. Reichel said. The sewer plant discharges treated effluent into the Peconic system at an outfall pipe located under the Route 105 bridge.

Nitrogen has frequently been identified as one of the cause of surface water degradation, and has been blamed in the past for algal blooms on the East End.

"This is such a great idea," Councilman Jim Wooten said during a discussion on the plan at Monday's work session. "It's going to be copied all over the place."

According to the [Golf Course Superintendents Association of America](#), "concerns about conservation have led golf courses to increasingly turn to effluent water for irrigation."

"Although the use of effluent on golf courses poses challenges for superintendents who must cope with high salinity and other pollutants, golfers should not notice any differences (other than an occasional early morning odor)," the GCSAA states.

The golf course won't get all the effluent, commonly called "gray water," Mr. Reichel said. Officials expected about 350,000 gallons per day of effluent to be diverted from the river, of the approximately 800,000 gallons per days that is discharged in total, Mr. Reichel said. The irrigation will only be done at night, when no one's playing golf, he added. And, he said, there's no water fountains on the course anyway, so it won't be used for drinking.

In the past, the town's sewage treatment plant didn't treat sewage effluent at a level high enough to allow the treated water to be used on the golf course, but once the upgrade is completed, it will be at a level safe for irrigation, Mr. Reichel said.

"The treated effluent will actually be cleaner than the groundwater there, because that water is high in iron," Mr. Reichel said.

The town will need to bore about 1,000 feet onto the golf course to connect with the existing irrigation pipes, and it also plans to install a shed with controls for the project in it, which will be maintained by the town.

"This is a great project for the East End," Mr. Reichel said. "It's a trend setter. There's nothing else like it on Long Island."