

Archives

THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

About your archives purchase: Your purchase of **25** articles expires on **06/09/2011 3:29 PM**. You have viewed **4** articles and have **21** articles remaining.

The article you requested is displayed below.

Suttle goes in search of sewer-upgrade funds Omaha's mayor has been named to a group trying to get federal cash for the costly project.

Author(s): Maggie O'Brien WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER
Date: March 30, 2010 **Section:** News

Omaha Mayor Jim Suttle has joined a national effort to reduce the amount of money cities must pay to comply with federally mandated **sewer** overhauls in their communities. Suttle's office announced Monday that he has been appointed to the Mayors **Water** Council, a committee of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. About 25 mayors from around the country are members, including Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago.

"I am excited about this opportunity to work with mayors from around our nation seeking relief for local ratepayers from the costly unfunded **federal** mandate," Suttle said in a statement.

Cities now have 15 years to bring **sewers** into compliance with **federal** clean **water** regulations.

Omaha is on a schedule to overhaul its **sewer** system by 2024.

The **project**, which has a price tag estimated at \$1.7 billion, calls for major **sewer** separation **projects**, two new treatment facilities and a 5.4-mile tunnel along the Missouri River.

Sewer fees are being increased to pay off the bonds to finance the **project**. Those fees, included on the Metropolitan Utilities District bill, could cost metro area households nearly \$38 a month by 2014 and \$50 a month by 2017. The average household now pays about \$15 a month in **sewer** fees.

Omaha received \$7.5 million in **federal** stimulus money to put toward the **sewer** overhaul. However, all of that money, with the exception of a \$1.9 million grant, came in the form of low-interest loans that the

city must repay, said Marty Grate, the city's environmental services manager.

The city also received a \$7.5 million state loan to renovate and expand its wastewater treatment plant.

The Mayors **Water** Council proposes that **federal** and local governments split the cost of **sewer** overhaul **projects**. The group plans to meet with officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice. Suttle will participate in those talks, his office said.

A partnership between the local government and the **federal** government is needed "to keep this program affordable for our local ratepayers," he said.

Congress has not appropriated funding for cities facing a **federal** mandate to update their **sewer** systems, said Lisa Ellis, a spokeswoman for U.S. Rep. Lee Terry, R-Neb.

However, she said, Terry and Suttle would "continue to work together to look at a variety of different funding options."

Contact the writer:

444-3100, maggie.obrien@owh.com

Technical problems: If you have a technical problem with your account please e-mail newslibrary@newsbank.com.

Copyright (c) 2010 Omaha World Herald