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## Boone County Regional Sewer District – A Short History

The Boone County Regional Sewer District (the District) was formed by a county-wide vote in October of 1973. The issue to create a regional sewer district was placed on a special ballot by the Boone County Circuit Court at the request of the Boone County Commission. The District was established as a public sewer district under Chapter 204 of the Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri. **The District has continuing authority over all of unincorporated Boone County (areas outside of city boundaries).** All registered voters of Boone County vote on District ballot issues. A five member Board of Trustees is appointed by the County Commission to govern the District. One of the commissioners serves as a member of the Board.

[More information on the current members of the Board >](#)

The District began as a planning agency with the Boone County Commission Office. Prior to the District's formation, wastewater treatment systems serving many subdivisions in unincorporated Boone County were operated and maintained by individuals or homeowner associations. Often these systems were not monitored by a licensed and trained operator and failed to meet Missouri water quality standards.

From 1973 to 1980 the District had no full time staff and sewer matters fell to County Planning and Zoning and the Public Works Department. In 1980 growth and an increased need for quality wastewater management prompted the District to retain a licensed wastewater operator. District staff began operating wastewater treatment systems under contract.

During the early eighties the County Commission assumed ownership of the sewer systems of twenty plus subdivisions. In 1985 the District purchased an additional fifteen wastewater collection and treatment systems from a private company. The goal was to consolidate sewer service in unincorporated Boone County under a single authority thereby standardizing maintenance practices and minimizing costs while protecting public health and the environment. At this time the District hired additional personnel and adopted its present system of calculating user's fees which include a base service fee plus an additional fee based on water usage.

[More information about the District's rate structure >](#)

The District Board made an effort to acquire Federal and State grant money to construct and improve the sewer system serving unincorporated Boone County in 1987. A bond issue of \$4.5 million was put to the voters of Boone County to provide a local match. The bond issue was defeated. The grants expired and the District was not able to take advantage of Federal and State funding available to cover up to ninety percent of construction costs. This is one of the primary reasons that the City of Columbia rates are less than District rates. The City of Columbia received state and federal grants to help fund the construction of its regional wastewater treatment facility. These grants reduced the City's debt. Lower debt expense allowed for lower user rates.

In 1987 the District Board hired Boone Electric Coop (BEC) to provide billing and collections for District users. Since most District customers were also members of BEC, it made sense to consolidate billing for the two utilities. Since that time BEC's services to the District have expanded to include computer networking, IT services, outgoing mail, internet and e-mail services and more.

When the manager of the District resigned in February of 1990, BEC offered temporary management services to the District's Board of Trustees. The contract, meant to be an interim arrangement, lasted until May 2000. Bob Alderson and Al Lynch, BEC's general manager and assistant manager, respectively, filled the same roles for the District. They concentrated on four main goals: 1) Improve the District's financial health; 2) Develop cooperative

relationships with planners, engineers, inspectors and office holders of both the City and the County; 3) Develop a capital improvements program focused on integrating systems and eliminating treatment facilities; and 4) Improve the District's image by implementing a plan for privacy fencing and landscaping around District treatment facilities.

BEC management improved District finances by conducting a user rate analysis and successfully going to the voters to increase rates. BEC developed replacement schedules and improved the quality of the District's fleet. They also modernized the accounting system and improved accountability to the Board and the public.

Shortly after BEC began to manage the District, a contract was developed with the City for consulting services from the City Sanitary Sewer Utility Department and that relationship still exists today. The relationship with the City has expanded to include wholesale treatment, sludge management, fuel for the District's fleet, plan review and emergency service back-up. The City's cooperation in supplying these services to the District reduces expenses and increases efficiency.

The District's relationship with Boone County fostered by BEC also remains strong today. In June of 1993, Alderson approached the Boone County Commission about hiring an engineer to work half time on Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NID) for sewer improvements. The District Board offered to pay half of the engineer's salary. The commission agreed and Tom Ratermann joined the team. In 1997, Ratermann moved his office from County Public Works to the District headquarters and began devoting all his time to sewer projects.

[More information about Neighborhood Improvement Districts >](#)

In May of 2000, management of the District transferred from a contract with Boone Electric to a contract with Boone County. Stan Shawver, the head of County Planning and Building Inspections, joined the staff as a part-time Executive Director, and Ratermann was promoted from Engineer to General Manager.

Ratermann worked for the District as a contract employee until April of 2004. At that time, the District Board hired him directly rather than going through Boone County Public Works. Ratermann remains the District's General Manager today.

As the District's General Manager, Ratermann spends much of his time continuing the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) initiated by BEC. The 1991 AC Kirkwood Report set the District on the path of eliminating existing treatment facilities by interconnecting appropriate areas with the City of Columbia sanitary sewer system and transporting the wastewater to the City's Regional WWTP or by building and improving District plants to serve larger geographic areas allowing for the integration of existing collections systems and the closure of existing treatment facilities.

The Kirkwood Report has been updated and expanded in 2004 and 2007. Successful revenue bond issue elections held in 1997, 2003 and 2008 gave the District the capacity to fund its CIP through the low interest State Revolving Fund program (SRF). Since 1997, with the help of the SRF, the District has eliminated nineteen lagoons and nine wastewater treatment plants, improved four existing facilities to serve a larger area and connected thirty subdivisions to the City of Columbia's sanitary sewer system.

The District closed on a combination SRF Direct Loan and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Grant at the end of December 2009. The combination grant/loan of approximately \$1 Million each will fund the next five projects of the CIP. Completion of this next round of projects will result in the closing of three treatment facilities and one lift station.

[More information about the Capital Improvement Program >](#)

In 2009, the City and the District were granted joint Tier 2 Continuing Authority by the Clean Water Commission (CWC). (The CWC is a seven-member citizen's board that is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate to govern the MDNR Division of Environmental Quality.) Tier 2 Continuing Authority will help the District and the City continue their goal to regionalize sanitary sewer service and to reduce discharges of treated wastewater to the creeks and streams of Boone County.

The District continues to make significant progress on all four of the goals set in 1990 by BEC management. The District is financially strong; the capital improvements program is well underway; District staff and staff from the City of Columbia and Boone County Planning and Public Works departments cooperate in many ways to serve the citizen's of Boone County; and treatment facilities situated in heavily populated areas are masked by privacy fencing and landscaping or have been eliminated.