

Airport won't be used for treated wastewater discharge

By Joe Burns

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Concerns that the Barnstable Municipal Airport might become a site for discharging treated effluent back into the groundwater are needless, said Barnstable DPW director Mark Ells.

"Right now there's no plan to use the airport site for potential future discharge," Ells said.

In last week's Register, it was reported that Yarmouth officials feared that plans by its Barnstable neighbor to use the airport as a secondary sight for wastewater discharge might complicate a study that is underway to determine how best to manage contaminants in Upper Gates and Lewis ponds. Both ponds are on airport property. Ells said the airport was one of eight sites considered when the town began planning for its future wastewater needs a decade ago. But it was not the town's top choice.

"It didn't come up as something we wanted to pursue at the time. There were just too many issues. I don't know if it would ever be viable," Ells said.

In its wastewater facilities plan, available on-line on the town of Barnstable Web site, the airport site is said to have several complicating issues: FAA restrictions, a shallow distance to groundwater and a nearby public water supply.

"You'd have to go sub-surface with it. There's no opportunity to do open sand filter beds. So that adds a tremendous amount of cost," Ells said.

The town's discharge site is in Hyannis on Bearses Way. It averages 2.2 million gallons of discharge a day. The town is planning for 4.2 million gallons of discharge per day, which should be within the capacity of the present site. Ells said the town prefers to continue to use that one site, but if needed, would create a secondary site off Route 132 just north of Hyannis Golf Course, on seven acres of land the town purchased with sewer reserve money. That site would be able to manage a half million gallons daily. Future needs may require Barnstable to look beyond its present discharge plans, Ells said.

"We're looking at potentially, major sewerage issues along the whole south side of the town. We're going to look all over the place for discharges and the airport is a large open undeveloped piece of land that could potentially be considered," Ells said. "I couldn't say at some point we wouldn't evaluate it."