

# Ames Tribune

---

## Erosion control project being considered to protect sanitary sewer

By Austin Harrington, Staff Writer [aharrington@amestrib.com](mailto:aharrington@amestrib.com)

Posted Jul 13, 2017 at 7:21 PM

Updated Jul 13, 2017 at 10:52 PM

Controlling erosion along the South Skunk River is a project the city will need to tackle if it hopes to save a nearby trail, the sanitary sewer line and the fourth hole at Homewood Golf Course.

That was part of the message during a Thursday meeting with representatives of RDG Planning & Design of Des Moines, which has been hired by the city of Ames to design improvement plans for the South Skunk River adjacent to Carr Park, Homewood Golf Course and Inis Grove Park. The project, which is called 2016-17 Storm Water Erosion Control Program, will include river bank stabilization slope stabilization, and drainage improvements to the trail along the South Skunk River.

During Thursday's meeting, Gregory Pierce, of RDG, and Mark Gansen, civil engineer for the city of Ames, walked about 10 audience members through the project, which will take place along the east side of the river from Carr Park north to the golf course.

"We have some bank stabilization issues out there, some slope stabilization issues," Gansen said.

He said there are also some drainage issues on the trail itself.

Much of that work will be done by using different techniques of diverting water away from the bank and forcing most of the flow into the center of the river.

Pierce said most of the work will take place in two areas along the bank, and the real concern is infrastructure that the city already has in place in the area.

"Both of these were fairly close to the sanitary sewer, so if erosion were to

continue over time, there's a chance that that could actually compromise that utility," Pierce said. "So that's kind of the most important part of this project."

If the sewer were to be compromised, that could lead to sewage flowing directly into the river and costly repairs for the city.

During the meeting, Pierce showed a map of how much the river has shifted since the 1930s. According to the images he presented, the river has moved dramatically in several areas and with a large flood event or hard rain, it could continue to move at a rapid rate.

"This thing moved quite a bit this last storm, it could stay like this for 10 years or it could move another 20 feet tomorrow. We really just don't know," Pierce said.

For that reason, the bank stabilization will be the main focus of the project and could cost around \$600,000 of the project's estimated \$700,000 to \$750,000 construction budget. According to Pierce, when the plan is eventually finalized and presented to the City Council, the trail issues will be an alternative that the council can add to the project, but it may not make it into the project's end plan.

Ames resident Larry Koehrsen attended the meeting and said he sees the project as more about saving the sewer than anything else.

"It seems to me that it's a sewer line repair project that is being rolled up into doing a lot of other things," said Koehrsen, who also writes a periodic column for the Ames Tribune. "That's a tough thing to do, to hold that river in place, and any project that goes in there is probably only going to last for a certain number of years and then they're going to see additional maintenance required."

The future plans for maintenance were not discussed at the meeting, however Pierce did outline a timeline for this project. He said that his hopes are to be receiving bids from contractors by fall and construction taking place this winter. He said that all of those plans depend on what the bids look like and which direction the city decides to go with the project.