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Lee County wants \$28M from state for wastewater plant upgrades

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One of Lee County's highest growth areas needs more capacity for wastewater treatment and the Lee County Board of Commissioners is hoping for some help from the state to provide it.

The board voted 5-0 Tuesday morning to approve the county's application for the state revolving fund to add 2 million gallons per day of treatment capacity to the Three Oaks Wastewater Treatment Plant. Located near Gulf Coast Town Center and Florida Gulf Coast University, the plant has a capacity of 4 million gallons per day.

Lee County Public Utilities Director Pam Keyes said the plant was slated to treat six-million gallons per day, but the water quality did not meet expectations.

"So with the additional treatment components, we'll be able to increase the capacity," Keyes said. "This is a high-growth area so it's important for us to be able cover future growth and future demand."

Instead of getting the \$28 million from a bank or bonding out the project, the county will take advantage of the state revolving fund's low interest rates.

"This is 1 percent, where if we went to a bank or bonded it out, it'd be 3, 4 percent. So this is a very good deal for us," Keyes said.

The project will not result in a rate increase for Lee County customers. The loan will be paid back over the course of 20 years at about \$1.6 million per year. The county has already spent about \$1.6 million in design costs.