

# CASE STUDY

## An Affordable Wastewater Collection and Treatment Solution for Municipalities

### PIOPIO, NEW ZEALAND

#### Problem

Located in rural New Zealand, the farming community of Piopio was in need of a wastewater treatment plant. In this area where run-off from dairy farms into streams and rivers can be a cause for concern, failing septic tanks at individual homes and shops were also having an increasingly negative effect on the local environment.

#### Solution

Situated within the geographical boundaries of the Waitomo District, Piopio was identified by the District Council as meeting the requirements for wastewater funding through the Ministry of Health. Accordingly, the District began the process of searching for the most effective solution, ultimately selecting an Orenco® Effluent Sewer and AdvanTex® Treatment System.

### Scenic Community Threatened by Wastewater Crisis

Considering how small it is — a population of under 400 — Piopio is home to a surprising assortment of retail attractions and services, including a museum, several bed & breakfast establishments, and the award-winning “Fat Pigeon Café,” not to mention an 18-hole golf course located just north of town. Travelers headed south on State Highway 3 often stop in Piopio to refuel before beginning the scenic, 90-minute drive to New Plymouth.

However, in 2007, this picturesque community of farmland and rolling hills was on the verge of a wastewater crisis. Located in a valley on alluvial soils, the area experiences frequent rainfall compounded by poor drainage, thus creating a high water table, especially in the

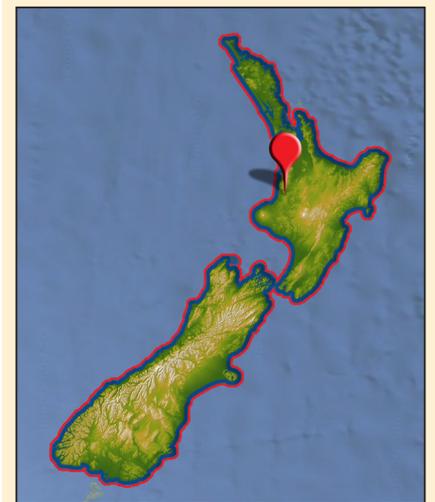


Treated effluent from Piopio's wastewater treatment plant — which is well below permit limits — receives final aeration via a rock outfall before being dispersed into the nearby Mokau River.

### Municipal Market

#### Project Overview

#### Piopio, New Zealand



#### Design Parameters

- 198 homes and businesses (with a potential build-out of 250)
- 1 school
- 135 m<sup>3</sup> average daily flow
- 227 m<sup>3</sup> peak daily flow

#### Permit Limits

- 20 mg/L BOD<sub>5</sub>
- 30 mg/L TSS
- 30 mg/L TKN
- 10 mg/L NH<sub>3</sub>-N
- 15 mg/L TP
- 500 MPN/100 mL FC

#### Effluent Quality

- 6 mg/L BOD<sub>5</sub>
- 7 mg/L TSS
- 5 mg/L TKN
- 4 mg/L NH<sub>3</sub>-N
- 6-7 mg/L TP
- 5 cfu/100 mL FC

#### Start-Up Date

- April 2012

#### Total Project Cost

- NZD\$3,450,000 + GST (Goods and Services Tax)

Photo Courtesy of Inflow Wastewater Specialists

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**PIOPIO, NEW ZEALAND**

wintertime. These conditions, combined with septic tanks in excess of thirty years old, meant that nearly all soakage fields (drainfields) were failing.

Although residents may not then have realized their urgent need for a sewer and sewage treatment plant, the township had been identified by the governing Waitomo District Council as qualifying for wastewater funding through the national Ministry of Health. Piopio required a solution that could handle the wastewater needs of all the homes and businesses in the township, plus the Piopio College for middle and high school students.

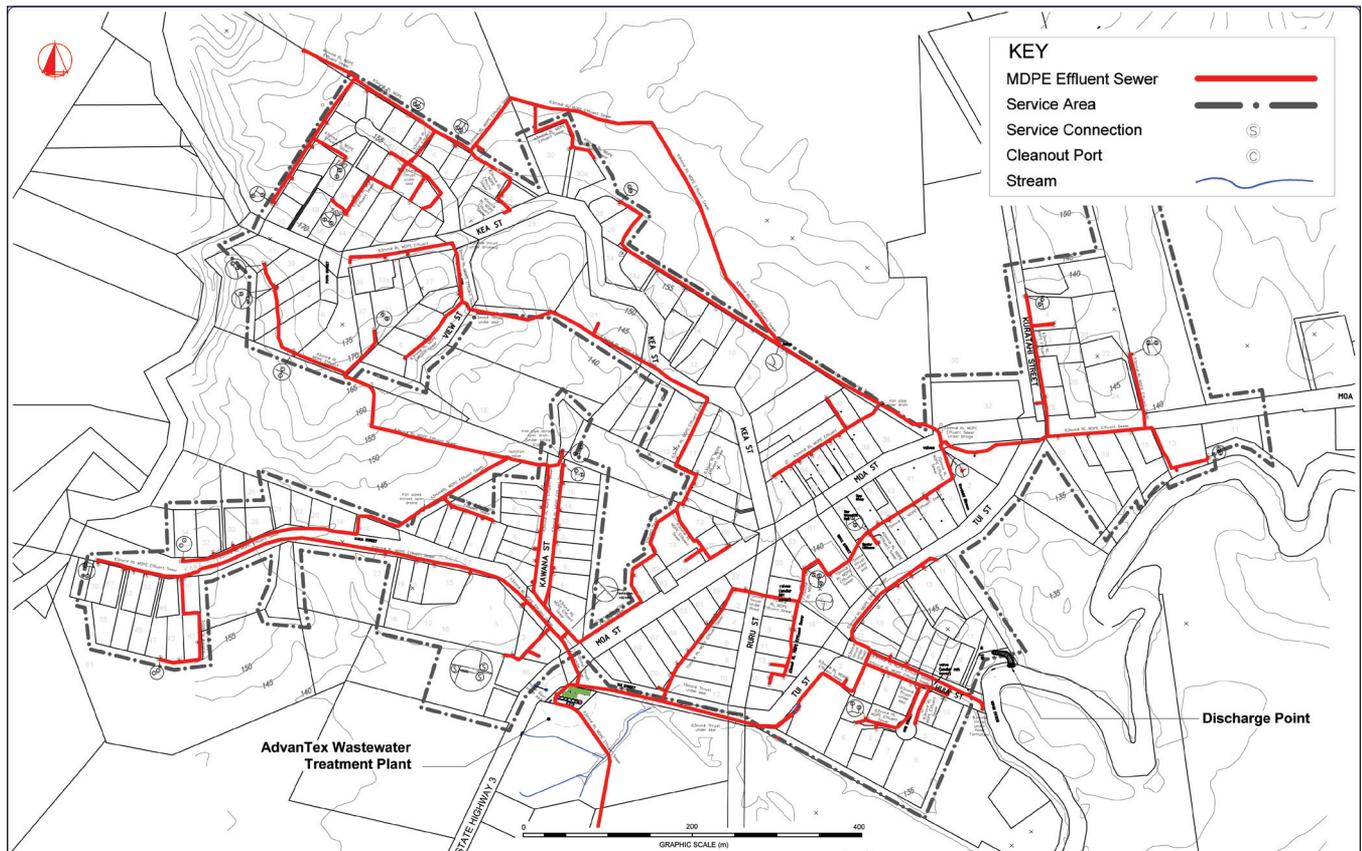
**An Effective Partnership: Orenco Systems® and Innoflow Technologies**

After a thorough bidding process in which various treatment options — such as grinder pumps and conventional gravity sewer with pump stations — were also considered, the Council eventually chose an Orenco® Effluent Sewer and AdvanTex® Treatment System, due to their reputation for low operating and capital costs, as well as robust quality of treatment.

Total project costs were NZD\$3,450,000 + Goods and Services Tax (GST). Costs included design and installation of effluent sewer, treatment plant, and rock outfall; supply and installation of 198 septic tanks for households and businesses, plus disposal of old tanks; and a two-year operating contract.

According to Christiaan Van Rooyen, Group Manager over assets for the Waitomo District Council, “The Orenco treatment plant offered by Innoflow Technologies was selected by the Council as it provided the overall lowest whole-of-life cost, whilst meeting the regulatory requirements of the Regional Council and public health needs of the community.”

Innoflow CEO Kevin Higham adds, “Because the effluent would be discharged into a nearby river, we had to have guaranteed results, and that’s what AdvanTex provides.” Based in Auckland, Innoflow Technologies has been a distributor of Orenco products for approximately 16 of its 20+ years in business. During that time, Innoflow has completed several hundred commercial wastewater projects, including about 20 effluent sewers, such as the one in Piopio.



All 198 homes and businesses in Piopio are connected to the Orenco® Effluent Sewer and AdvanTex® Treatment System. The system has completely eliminated the bad odors that previously emanated from the creek that runs through town.

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Located on the edge of the township, the fifteen AX-100 units at Piopio's wastewater treatment plant draw little attention, as they are low-profile and emit no sounds or smells. These low maintenance units can also be installed further above ground, if desired.

“Throughout the entire project, Innoflow has acted professionally,” comments Van Rooyen, “and we are very pleased with the level of service we have received as they continue to operate the system according to contract.”

The District Council's initial two-year contract with Innoflow provided for the design and installation of an Orenco Effluent Sewer, an AdvanTex Treatment System, and a rock outfall for the final aeration of effluent prior to dispersal into the Mokau River. The contract also included the purchase and installation of 198 interceptor tanks for all local homes and businesses, plus the disposal of old septic tanks. Finally, a subsidiary of Innoflow would provide operating services for the duration of the contract.

### Concerns Put to Rest

Piopio and the surrounding countryside are rather hilly, which is why the township's Orenco Effluent Sewer is comprised of approximately 65% STEP (Septic Tank Effluent Pump) units and just 35% STEG (Septic Tank Effluent Gravity) units. Nevertheless, the small-diameter collection lines that feed into the AdvanTex Treatment System are well-suited for a variety of terrain, as they are buried just 76-91 cm deep (30"-36") deep and designed to follow the contour of the land.

Although residents of Piopio were initially quite anxious about how the installation of new tanks would affect their gardens, driveways, and the overall appearance of their homes, Innoflow took great care in allaying these fears by engaging directly with homeowners through a lengthy public consultation process that included discussion of specific tank placements as well as methods of remediation — such as top-soil replacement, hand-seeding, and raking — that Innoflow would employ following installation.

In the end, property owners took note of the relative simplicity of the process, with the placement of most residential septic tanks accomplished in less time than expected. Furthermore, installing the shallowly buried collection lines that connect each home to the wastewater system was also a fairly quick and easy process, thus minimizing disruption to the daily activities and traffic flow within the community.

### Satisfying Results

As the plant at Piopio approaches its two-year anniversary, effluent test results continue to be excellent, averaging well below allowable limits set by the District Council. Van Rooyen states, “The plant has been operating for over 18 months with no issues, and all test results to date have been within the limits of our Resource Consent.”

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**PIOPIO, NEW ZEALAND**

Allen Scholtz, former Operations Manager for the Waitomo District Council, adds, “I think the end result demonstrates that we did choose the best solution for the project. The big factors were price and quality of results. The key was that we did not compromise quality for the sake of affordability.”

Local citizens are also satisfied with the way things have turned out regarding their new wastewater treatment facility. Placed near the southern edge of town in a residential area just off the main road, the site is well-landscaped and, according to Higham of Innoflow “does not look like a sewage plant.”

Before the plant was built, the creek that runs through town was known to give off a distinctly unsavory odor, undoubtedly caused by contaminated groundwater, which found its way from the failing soak-age fields of nearby homes and into the stream.

Gaynor McCartney, a long-time resident of Piopio who maintains an informational website about the township, commented, “I think most of us are just so pleased that the many years are over, of waiting to get the problems sorted out. To say that the creek used to smell a bit is a big understatement, but now the smell is all gone.”

As stated on McCartney’s website, “Piopio is a small, friendly, rural community” with “all necessities for the traveling public” where “friendly accommodation is one of our pleasures.” Now that the township has a reliable, efficient wastewater plant, Piopio can continue to be a favorite stopping-off point for those passing through, in addition to being a lovely refuge for those who call it home.



*Photo Courtesy of Gaynor McCartney*  
 With an effluent sewer system, shallowly-buried collection lines follow the contour of the land, making them relatively easy to install despite the hilly terrain around Piopio.

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— Allen Scholtz, former Operations Manager for the Waitomo District Council

**Municipal Market**

**Funding Sources**

- New Zealand Ministry of Health grant
- Waitomo District grant

**Maintenance Costs**

- Innoflow O&M contract: NZD\$14.29 per connection
- Covers operation of Effluent Sewer and Treatment Plant

**Collection System/Primary Treatment**

- Effluent Sewer with STEP/STEG units

**Secondary Treatment**

- 15 AX100 units
- 2 blend tanks - 23 m<sup>3</sup> each (6,000 US gal.)
- 5 recirculation tanks - 23 m<sup>3</sup> each (6,000 US gal.)

**Tertiary Treatment**

- Ultraviolet disinfection

**Dispersal**

- Discharge via rock outfall to surface water

**Monitoring and Control**

- Orenco TCOM remote telemetry control panel

For more information about Orenco® Effluent Sewers and AdvanTex® Treatment Systems in New Zealand and Australia, contact Innoflow Technologies, Distributor, at 09 426 1027.



wastewater specialists

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For more information about Orenco Effluent Sewers and AdvanTex® Treatment Systems outside New Zealand and Australia, contact Orenco Systems®, Inc., at 800-348-9843.



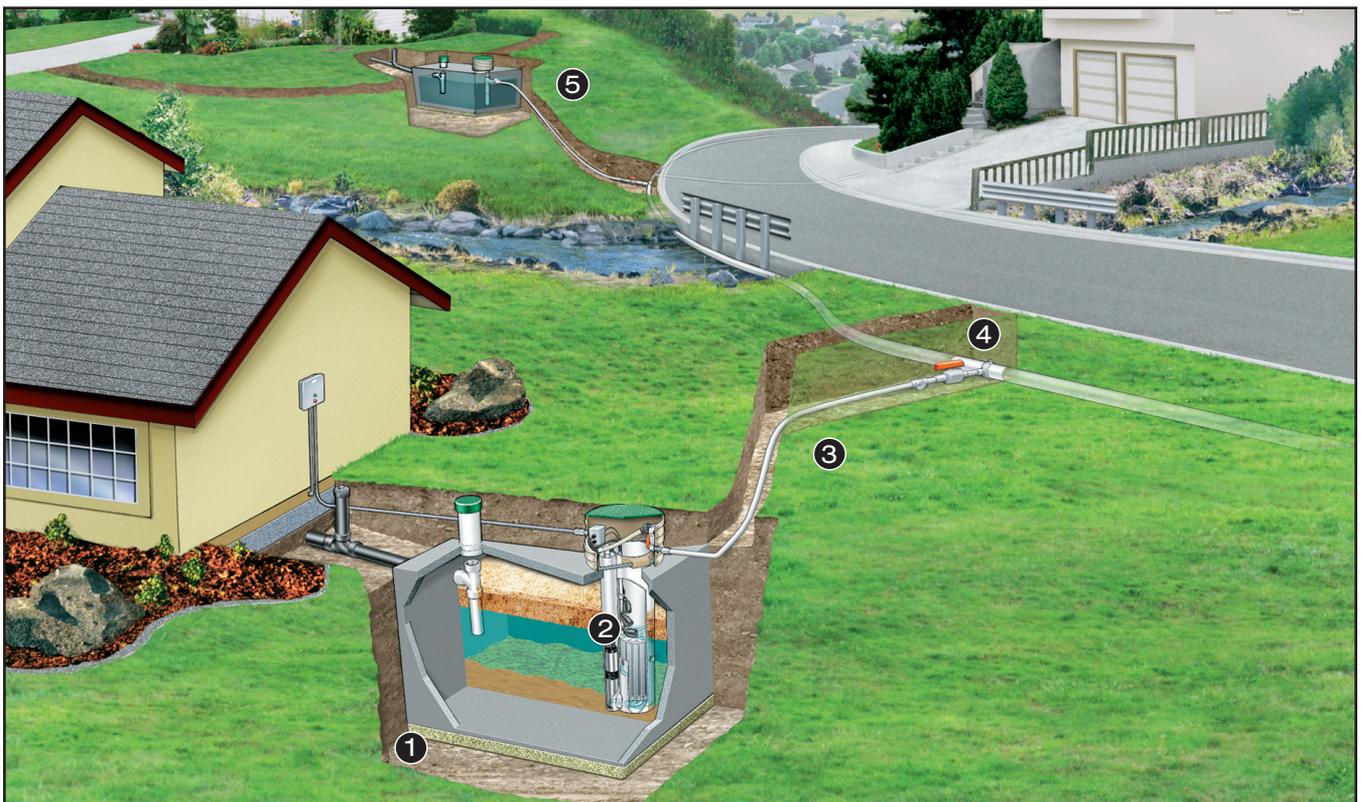
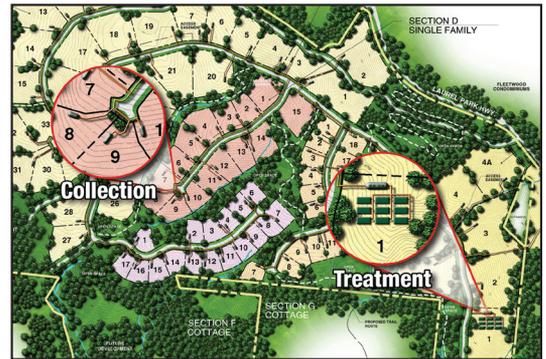
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## HOW IT WORKS:

### Orenco® Effluent-Only Sewer to AdvanTex® Treatment System

With an Orenco® Effluent Sewer, every lot in a community or subdivision includes an on-lot tank for collecting household wastewater. (See illustration, below.)

Solids remain in the tank, for passive, natural treatment. Then the filtered effluent is discharged (by either pump or gravity) through shallowly-buried, small-diameter collection lines that follow the contour of the land. The filtered effluent then flows to a nearby AdvanTex® Treatment System (See illustration, Side B.)



**1** Watertight tanks provide primary treatment, so only liquids are conveyed to the treatment plant. With proper use, tanks can go 8-12 years between pump-outs.

**2** Our patented Biotube® Pump Vault filters out solids, and our lightweight, non-corroding pumps last more than 25 years.

**3** One-inch (25-mm) diameter service lines can be easily installed with a trencher.

**4** Small-diameter main lines follow the contour of the ground, saving excavation costs. No expensive manholes or lift stations are required.

**5** Filtered effluent is conveyed by gravity from homes at higher elevations, so no pump is typically required.

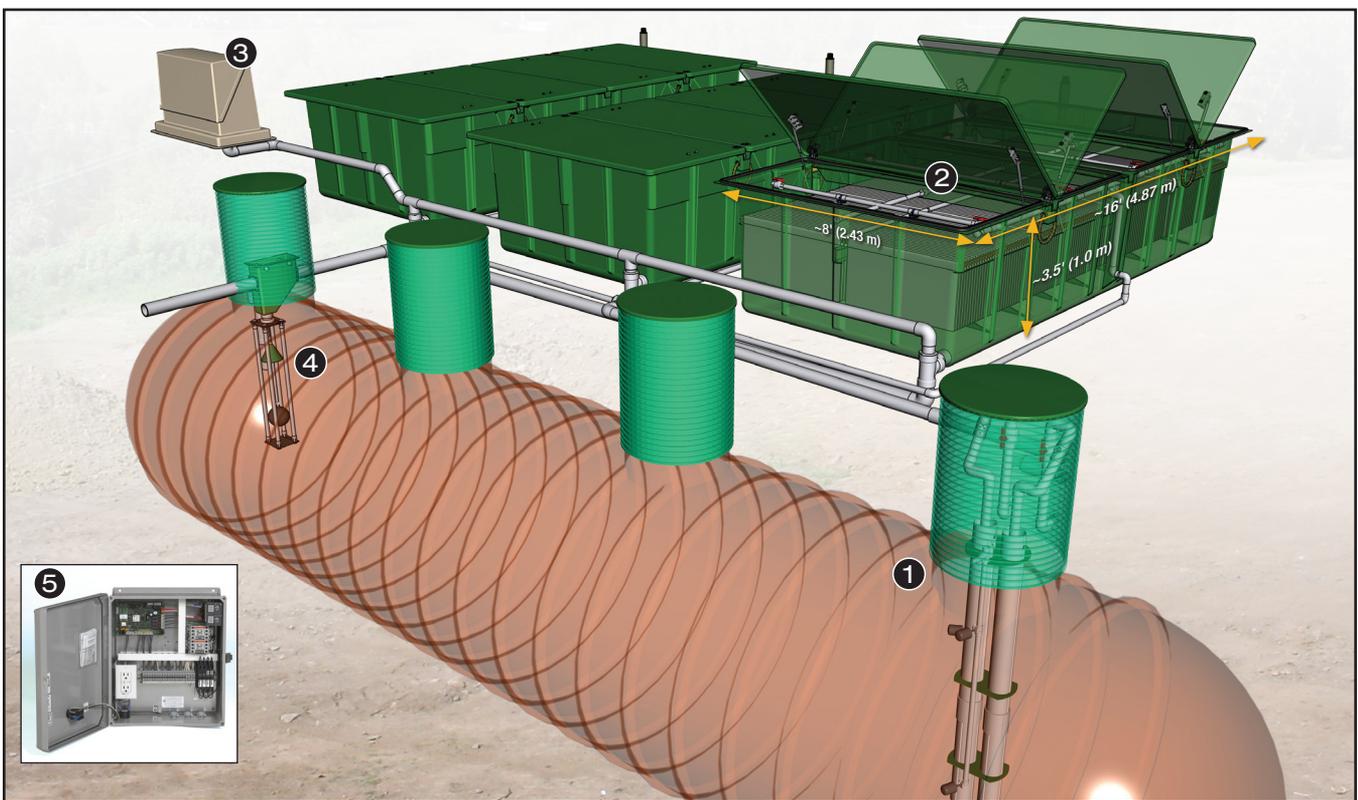
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## HOW IT WORKS:

### Orenco® Effluent-Only Sewer to AdvanTex® Treatment System

AdvanTex Treatment Systems are an award-winning<sup>1</sup>, low-cost, and low-maintenance technology. They can be installed in-ground or partially bermed, for a very low profile. Larger units can be purchased with a catwalk (for operator ease of servicing) and set above-ground. Filtered effluent from each property's on-lot tank is conveyed through shallowly-buried, small diameter collection lines to a recirc tank at the AdvanTex treatment facility.

<sup>1</sup> To see awards video, go to: <http://www.orenco.com/videos/orenco/AwardsPlayer.html>



- 1** The recirc tank includes a flow inducer with high-head effluent pumps (which are controlled by a panel). Then the liquid is pumped to the AdvanTex pod in small, even doses.
- 2** AdvanTex pods include hanging sheets of textile media on which microorganisms grow and digest waste, naturally.
- 3** The vent fan assembly pulls air through the AdvanTex pod to maintain an aerobic environment, while using very little energy.
- 4** The recirculating splitter valve sends the liquid back through the treatment process again when tank levels are low and discharges it when tank levels are high.
- 5** AdvanTex systems use a remote telemetry control panel, which allows operators to check on the system from office or home, without traveling to the site. The panel's dedicated phone line allows real-time remote adjustments and control.

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