



NEW JERSEY CLEAN WATER COUNCIL MEETING

June 13, 2023 @ 10:00 A.M.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

INTRODUCTIONS

Tony McCracken called meeting to order at 10:04 AM

Council Participants (10): George Bakun, Amy Goldsmith, Sandra Howland, David Kovach, Justin Baker, Tony McCracken, Pamela Goodwin, Harry Wozunk, Maryann Holden, Russ Furnari

DEP Participants (8): John Adegoke, Kerri Standowski, Christine Enright, Susan Rosenwinkel, Jennifer Feltis Cortese, John Murray, Gabriel Mahon, Robert Newby

Public Participants (1): Wale Adewunmi

APPROVAL OF MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- April 11, 2023 - Approved: Tony McCracken Motioned, Amy Goldsmith Second

DEP UPDATES

John Murray provided the program updates:

CSO Public Hearing: The Division of Water Quality conducted a virtual public hearing on April 17, 2023 (afternoon and evening session) for NJPDES CSO permits as issued March 3 and March 6, 2023, for North Hudson Sewerage Authority Adams Street Wastewater Treatment Plant and North Hudson's River Road Wastewater Treatment Plant, respectively. The opening statement by NJDEP was read in English then in Spanish. Approximately 40 external participants attended in total. Many commenters expressed general support but there were comments which focused on shortening the project timeline, the need for guidance on public engagement, more green infrastructure earlier in the LTCP implementation schedule and general concerns on flooding.

Projected Finalization of NJPDES CSO permits for North Bergen MUA – Woodcliff Sewage Treatment Plant and the Town of Guttenberg: The CSO program issued the first set of finalized NJPDES CSO permits that incorporate the Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) requirements on May 25, 2023. These permits were issued in draft on December 9, 2022, with a public hearing on January 23, 2023, and the public comment period ended on February 13, 2023. These permits require implementation of the submitted LTCP over the five-year effective period of the NJPDES CSO permit. The CSO Policy and NJPDES regulations require "no less than 85%" wet weather percent capture. North Bergen/Guttenberg's LTCP indicates that baseline percent capture is presently at 89% and the selected projects are projected to reach 92% upon completion.

Release of draft NJPDES Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) permits for Joint Meeting of Essex and Union Counties (JMEUC) and the City of Elizabeth: The CSO program issued draft NJPDES CSO permits for JMEUC and the City of Elizabeth on May 2023. The City of Elizabeth (who sends combined sewage to JMEUC) has been proactive in instituting CSO control measures in advance of the permit release; however, this is a very large system with 29 CSO outfalls where significant work is still needed in order to meet the required wet weather percent capture to reduce

CSOs. Capital costs for selected projects as presented in the Long Term Control Plan total \$200 million with an implementation schedule of 38 years.

Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners (PVSC) NJ Water Bank project: On May 30, 2023, the Municipal Finance and Construction Element issued an Authorization to Advertise for Bids to the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners (PVSC) for NJ Water Bank project. This project includes modifications to the secondary treatment processes at the wastewater treatment facility to increase wet weather treatment capacity from 400 million gallons per day (gpd) to 720 million gpd and implement sludge train improvements. The project is an important component of the PVSC's Long-Term Control Plan and will be eligible for 80% principal forgiveness through the award of American Rescue Plan funds. Next steps include Authorization to Award, contract certification to the NJ Infrastructure Bank, and award of a short-term loan. Principal forgiveness will be confirmed when the short-term loan is awarded.

Finalization of Master General Farm Labor Housing (GFLH) NJPDES Permit: DWQ issued the Master GFLH permit on April 28, 2023, to regulate the discharge of sanitary sewage to ground water (i.e., septic systems) from farm labor housing activities. The Master GFLH permit has an effective date of June 1, 2023. The development of this general permit was due in part to inspections performed by the Department where it was determined that there were existing unpermitted discharges to ground water. Issuance of a general permit is advantageous over an individual permit with respect to streamlined permit conditions and costs. In anticipation of the final permit release, DWQ met with representatives of Camden County Board of Agriculture (CCBA), Atlantic County BOA and many farmers regarding the proposed Master Permit on April 24, 2023. DWQ staff summarized the draft permit, listened to their concerns, and shared a summary of questions that as used in the development of a Frequently Asked Questions that can be found online with the permits. The meeting was interactive and productive. DWQ reiterated that staff will continue to work with permittees to further clarify any questions and concerns that they may have and to work towards compliance with all permit conditions.

Request for Coordination to facilitate SRF Financing of Biogas Projects: Digestion of sewage sludge generates biogas which, after treatment, can power Combined Heat and Power (CHP) operations or be fed into the natural gas supply grid. The USEPA considers biogas generation as SRF eligible provided that the gas provides a resilient source of power to environmental infrastructure or sold "back to the grid" and the resultant revenues are used for SRF loan repayments and to offset infrastructure operation costs. Several large wastewater utilities have either implemented biogas/CHP projects or have recently approached the NJ Water Bank regarding financing opportunities. Department programs have met to discuss preliminary food waste co-digestion as a feasible alternative to landfilling food waste or sewage sludge. Developing pathways to optimize co-digested bio-gas generation and recovery at New Jersey's wastewater treatment plants will require a holistic review of co-digested biogas proposals that consider all potential impacts, such as emissions and community impacts of trucking food waste, proper disposal of residuals, a determination if any profit-sharing strategies are acceptable, loan conditions to ensure revenues are applied to loan balances, and required permitting and approvals, including Title V air permits, Environmental Justice compliance and BPU approval. The NJ Water Bank will want to make a timely determination of SRF eligibility due to the Federal Inflation Reduction Act (Act) that has a financing deadline of 2031. The Act is a potential source of Investment Tax Credit of up to 30% of the costs of a project that meets energy efficiency standards. The remaining costs can potentially be financed through the NJ Water Bank. Since the Act includes deadlines, any jointly funded projects will need to move expeditiously through the review and permitting processes to qualify for the Act funding.

Other:

The Council and DEP staff briefly discussed Farm Labor Housing General Permits limits. In general discharges greater than 2,000 gallons per day need a NJPES permit. The LHGP is written based on occupancy, more than 40 beds (equal to persons). Coordinated site visits are taking place and the proximity of drinking water to sewage treatment is inspected and reviewed for compliance. Other residential or single-family homes are not part of the design flow for permit compliance, only labor housing. However, the design flow of the system will need to meet total flow requirements.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

- Presentation on Harmful Algal Blooms by Robert Newby - Research Scientist – Microbiology Division of Science and Research | NJDEP
- WQMPs - Brief update and Q & A with Gabe Mahon - Bureau Chief – NJPDES Stormwater Permitting and Water Quality Management
 - New rules do not prevent inter basin transfer.
 - New landscape data will need to be used. Currently there are pending submissions.
 - Septic plans – lots of applications, creating longer review times.
 - However, the program has made improvements in the efficiency of reviews in the last two years and have processed the most applications than they have in last 10 years. It should be noted that the program has also received more applications than have in the past as well.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Next meetings:
 - July 11, 2023
 - August 8, 2023
 - September 12, 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn from Russ Furnari and second by Amy Goldsmith at 11:36AM.