Newsroom

News Releases from Region 3

Feds, State, Settle Clean Water Violations with Harrisburg and Capital Region Water

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(PHILADELPHIA- February 11, 2015) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today announced a proposed partial settlement with co-plaintiff Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) and the City of Harrisburg and Capital Region Water to resolve alleged Clean Water Act violations involving sewer overflows and discharges of polluted stormwater to the Susquehanna River and Paxton Creek. The agreement will help protect people's health, the two impacted waterways, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

Under the proposed agreement, Capital Region Water will take major steps to improve the operation and maintenance of Harrisburg's wastewater and stormwater collection systems, including construction upgrades at its wastewater treatment plant. The upgrades will significantly reduce discharges of nitrogen pollution from the plant, which is currently the largest point-source of nitrogen pollution to the Susquehanna River. In addition, Capital Region Water will conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions within its combined sewer system and develop a long term control plan to curtail combined sewer overflows.

The work under the partial settlement is estimated to cost $82 million and be completed within a period of approximately five years. Once a long term control plan is approved by EPA, the court agreement will need to be modified, or a new one will need to be put in place, to include implementation of the plan.

"This settlement reflects EPA's commitment to an integrated approach for tackling multiple sewer and stormwater overflow problems, and helping Pennsylvania meet the nitrogen and phosphorus reduction goals for improving its local waters and restoring the Chesapeake Bay," said EPA Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin. "This phased approach for controlling combined sewer overflows over time includes some early action projects to reduce pollution now, while conducting further assessment and planning for long term solutions."

The settlement, filed simultaneously with the complaint in federal court in Harrisburg by the U.S. Department of Justice on behalf of EPA and PADEP, addresses problems with Harrisburg's combined sewer system, which during rain events and dry weather, frequently discharges raw sewage, industrial waste and polluted stormwater into Paxton Creek and the Susquehanna River, which are part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The settlement does not impose civil penalties against the City due to Harrisburg's current financial situation.

Keeping raw sewage and contaminated stormwater out of the waters of the United States is one of EPA's National Enforcement Initiatives because sewage overflows and storm water discharges from municipal sewer systems pose a significant threat to water quality and public health. EPA is working to reduce discharges from sewer overflows by obtaining commitments from cities to implement timely, affordable solutions.

The proposed settlement is subject to a 30-day comment period and court approval after it is published in the federal register. It will be available at: http://www.justice.gov/atr/Consent_Decrees.html