

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



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City of Santa Paula

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October 11, 2013

Ms. Kathleen H. Johnson
Director, Enforcement Division
United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 941 05-3901

SUBJECT: THE CITY OF SANTA PAULA RESPONSE TO (MS4) COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT

Dear Ms. Johnson:

The City has reviewed the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (U.S. EPA) Compliance Audit Report dated July 22, 2013 of the City of Santa Paula's Stormwater Quality Management Program (Program) and offers the following comments. The City, like many entities and municipalities in California, has experienced severe economic hardship over the last few years. As a result, the Department of Public Works made fiscal adjustments and currently operates with a reduced staff. The City has been challenged to fulfill daily operations and satisfy regulatory compliance. The department continues to rely on reduced staff and has contracted with private consultants for assistance. The City appreciates your understanding of the department's progress of its regulatory obligations. This letter will not attempt to address all of the individual findings in the audit report but will try to focus on the major elements as identified in the cover letter and executive summary.

Those items as indicated in the U.S. EPA letter dated July 22, 2013 include the following:

- Conduct field screening of its storm drain system to identify illicit connections as required by Part 4.H.1.3(a)(2) of the Permit;
- Maintain records of illicit connection investigations as required by Part 4.H.1.3 (b) of the Permit;
- Develop procedures for the documentation of all reports of suspected IC/IDs or map all confirmed IC/IDs to identify priority areas for further investigation as required by Part 4.F1.1.4 of the Permit;
- Submit, either independently or in conjunction with other stakeholders, an annual progress report with respect to the achievement of applicable WLAs as required by Part 5.V1.3(c) (l) of the Permit
- Submit a report to the Regional Board describing the additional BMPs that will be implemented to prevent or reduce the discharge of E. coli, fecal coliform, and aluminum in its stormwater discharges found to be causing or contributing to persistent exceedances of applicable Water Quality Standards as required by Part 2.3(a) of the Permit.

The following are responses to issues of critical importance to the City, identified by the U.S. EPA in the July 22, 2013 Compliance Audit Report:

Comment No. 1: Conduct field screening of its storm drain system to identify illicit connections as required by Part 4.H.I.3 (a) (2) of the Permit.

Response No. 1: The City does not have staff directly assigned to wastewater and stormwater collection system operation and maintenance. Existing Public Works staff is limited to the Director, one clerical staff, one senior engineering technician, and water supply operations staff.

In effort to meet public works demands on the City, it has utilized contracts for operation of their collection systems through various contract entities. The routine contracts for these services expired in 2011. Some assessment of the system was conducted under earlier contracts; those were not noted during the audit or references by staff during the inspection. Staff assisting in the audit inspection may not be aware of all activities that were completed as part of the prior contracts and the records that were collected. Most recently emergency action was undertaken by Ventura Regional Sanitation District. The actions included clean up sanitary sewer overflows and decontamination of the surface areas that were impacted by the overflows.

The City has developed a new contract with American Water Operations and Maintenance Inc. to implement the wastewater collection system maintenance program. As part of that program additional information can be developed on the integrity of the City's stormwater system and the minimization of illicit connections/illicit discharges (IC/ID) through that system and subsequently to surface waters of the Santa Clara River Watershed.

More detailed attention to the IC/ID provisions of the MS4 Permit will be conducted in the future. This will entail activity both under contract and by City staff. This will also be coordinated with the Principal Permittee, Ventura County Watershed Protection District, to a higher degree in the future.

Comment No. 2: Maintain records of illicit connection investigations as required by Part 4.H.I.3 (b) of the Permit.

Response No. 2: The City does have a section of its City Code that addresses the stormwater issue. The City has not had adequate resources to develop a separate written procedure for dealing with this issue. The City has dealt with the issue on a case by case basis. There is a 24 hour a day police presence within the City. Any reported emergency within the City can be checked and in the case of a serious problem, appropriate individuals may be notified and action taken as needed. This can also be applied to a spill or any other type of illicit discharge. The City also maintains a phone number for the public to report illicit discharges and the number is prominently displayed on the City's Public Works website. The City does not have a written procedure, but there is a process that can address serious illicit activity.

The City has also developed a recreational vehicle holding tank disposal system for its residents. The disposal site was constructed as part of the new wastewater treatment project completed under a Design Build Operate and Finance (DBOF) delivery method. The availability of the disposal site should reduce the possible illicit discharge of human waste to areas where it can enter stormwater runoff in the City.

The completion of the disposal site project also reduces the potential for elevated levels of all forms of nitrogen in surface water in the Santa Clara River Watershed. The City's old wastewater treatment plant discharged effluent from the trickling filter system under a NPDES Permit to the Santa Clara River. The

City's new plant treats the wastewater with an improved technology and disposes of the highly treated wastewater to disposal ponds, thereby eliminating the potential sources of pathogens and nitrogen that were previously discharged directly to surface water.

As noted in Comment No. 1, the City recently prepared a new contract with American Water to implement the wastewater collection system maintenance program. As part of that program additional information can be developed on the integrity of the City's stormwater system and the minimization of IC/ID within the City.

More detailed attention to the IC/ID provisions of the MS4 Permit will be conducted in the future. This will entail activity both under contract and by City staff. This will also be coordinated with the Principal Permittee, Ventura County Watershed Protection District, to a higher degree in the future.

Comment No. 3: Develop procedures for the documentation of all reports of suspected IC/IDs or map all confirmed IC/IDs to identify priority areas for further investigation as required by Part 4.F1.I.4 of the Permit.

Response No. 3: As noted in Comment No. 1, the City has not had adequate resources to develop a separate written procedure for dealing with the IC/ID issue. The City has dealt with the issue on a case by case basis.

The City recently prepared a new contract with American Water to implement the wastewater collection system maintenance program. As part of that program additional information can be developed on the integrity of the City's stormwater system and the minimization of IC/ID within the City.

More detailed attention to the IC/ID provisions of the MS4 Permit will be conducted in the future. This will entail activity both under contract and by City staff. This will also be coordinated with the Principal Permittee, Ventura County Watershed Protection District, to a higher degree in the future.

Comment No. 4: Submit, either independently or in conjunction with other stakeholders, an annual progress report with respect to the achievement of applicable WLAs as required by Part 5. VI.3(c) (I) of the Permit.

Response No. 4: In the County of Ventura Watershed Protection District (District) letter to U.S. EPA dated September 13, 2013, page 10, the District responded to the issue of reporting for applicable waste load allocations (WLAs) and total maximum daily loads (TMDLs). The District letter identifies that some elements identified as deficiencies in the audit prepared for the City (Copermittee) are being accomplished by the District. City staff will endeavor to maintain awareness of these elements and improve participation as part of its ongoing activity. This includes water quality data applicable to the TMDL constituent levels. One item noted as being submitted by the District is TMDL and WLA monitoring at the Freeman Diversion. Monitoring data at the Freeman Diversion does not indicate that nitrogen or chloride levels exceed the current Water Quality Standards at that location (United Water Conservation District).

Comment No. 5: Submit a report to the Regional Board describing the additional BMPs that will be implemented to prevent or reduce the discharge of E. coli, fecal coliform, and aluminum in its stormwater discharges found to be causing or contributing to persistent exceedances of applicable Water Quality Standards as required by Part 2.3(a) of the Permit.

Response No. 5: As indicated in Comment No. 2, the City's new wastewater treatment plant provides improved technology and disposes of the highly treated wastewater to disposal ponds, thereby eliminating the potential sources of pathogens and nutrients that were previously discharged to the Santa Clara River.

As indicated in Comment No. 2, the City constructed the holding tank disposal location to assist in reduction of the potential for introduction of the E-coli and fecal coliform bacteria in the Santa Clara River Watershed.

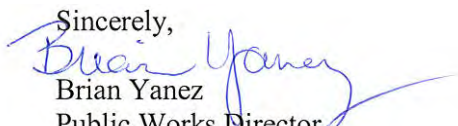
Additionally, the City of Santa Paula is currently applying for grant money through the Proposition 84 Stormwater Grant Program. The funds would be used for effective BMP's to address the Receiving Water Limitations -Santa Clara River Mass Emission WQS Exceedences. Such BMP's may include Hydroseparators to be installed at the 12 outfalls within the City of Santa Paula.

The County of Ventura Watershed Protection District (District) letter to U.S. EPA dated September 13, 2013, responded to the issue of implementation of BMPs for pathogens (see page 6, copy attached). The District letter indicates that future Annual Reports will include additional information regarding best management practices (BMPs) for pathogens. In addition, the District letter identifies a bacteria source tracking study will be initiated within the District in the fall of 2013 (see page 7). This study will identify the extent to which these flows contain human fecal contamination. The District will also conduct an additional study of human pathogen indicator (HF183) at major outfalls. This study will indicate frequency of human contamination at sample locations.

The District letter responded to the issue of BMPs for total aluminum (see page 8). The District letter indicates that future Annual Reports will include additional information regarding BMPs for total aluminum. The District letter indicated that aluminum is natural and ubiquitous to the soils of the area. In addition, the District letter states that the District will conduct a comprehensive assessment of aluminum in the Santa Clara River, among other local watersheds. This study will be used by the District and Copermittees to determine what additional BMPs might be effective in reducing aluminum concentrations in outfall discharges.

As a result of the findings of the new operations and maintenance contract, the City anticipates better information will be provided relative to the MS4 Permit and other water quality issues in the Santa Clara River Watershed in the vicinity of the City of Santa Paula.

Sincerely,


Brian Yanez
Public Works Director
City of Santa Paula

Attachment: EPA Compliance Audit Report for the Ventura County Watershed Protection District