



Town of Winchester

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March 31, 2010

EPA – Region 1
Attn.: Thelma Murphy
Office of Ecosystem Protection
5 Post Office Square – Suite 100
Mail Code: OEP06-4
Boston, Massachusetts 02109-3912

**Re: *NPDES Small MS4 General Permit
Public Comments on the Draft Permit for the North Coastal Watershed***

Dear Ms. Murphy:

The Town of Winchester has reviewed the draft General Permit for Discharges from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) in the North Coastal Watershed recently issued for public comment by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA). Based on our review of the draft permit, the Town is providing the following detailed comments on various permit requirements, along with recommendations as to how those items can be clarified or improved upon as requested by the EPA.

As a general comment, the Town would like to express its overriding concern for the extensive requirements outlined in this draft permit, particularly those associated with the Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) Program, the Good Housekeeping and Pollution Prevention requirements, and the Outfall Monitoring Program. These proposed requirements represent a steep change from the first phase of the permit, which expired in 2008. They will have a significant negative impact on Town's operating budget and will strain the Town's already limited resources. The Town of Winchester, like most Massachusetts communities, has seen its municipal budget stressed by decreased property taxes, state aid, and other revenues as a result of the recent national and global economic downturn. This problem is expected to be further compounded in the FY2011 operating budget, as communities face the loss of additional state aid. The proposed permit requirements, while commendable for their commitment to improving water quality, will place an additional burden on cities and towns during an already difficult economic climate. Overall, the Town requests that EPA consider limiting or phasing in some of the requirements with the largest financial impact and/or provide financial and technical assistance to help communities with implementation of the permit.

Similarly, the Fact Sheet notes that stormwater utilities are one possible mechanism to assist municipalities fund and implement the more stringent requirements of the proposed general permit. However, there are significant up-front costs, as well as major technical and public outreach challenges, associated with creating a stormwater utility in Massachusetts (as evidenced by the modest number of such utilities currently in place). The Town requests that EPA, together

with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MADEP), the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) and other relevant governmental agencies and associations, develop a formal program to assist municipalities interested in establishing local or regional stormwater utilities.

Detailed comments on specific permit requirements are provided below.

1. Comment: Part 1.7.4. The draft permit does not detail the steps between posting of the Notice of Intent for public comment and issuing Authorization. For example, who manages the public comment process? How will EPA determine based on public comments if additional information is required or if an individual permit may be required? Furthermore, should the public comment process substantially delay issuance of a formal authorization by the EPA, will the timelines for performance of the various permit requirements, particularly those required within the first year, be extended?

Recommendation: Add specific language to clarify responsibilities and timelines regarding the public notice and public comment process.

2. Comment: General. Permittees should be given a minimum of one full permit year to complete the requirements for Permit Year 1, especially given the number and magnitude of required elements. If the effective date is anything other than July 1st, the amount of time permittees are allowed to complete the multitude of Year 1 requirements will be unfairly reduced.

Recommendation: The EPA should define Permit Year 1 as ending on June 30th following a period of not less than 12 months after the effective date. This will provide permittees with the full year needed to complete the first year requirements, as well as possibly set apart a portion of time to comply with Parts 1.7 through 1.9 of the permit. As an alternative, the EPA could administratively set the effective date of the permit exactly four months prior to July 1st to directly align with Parts 1.7-1.9 (obtaining authorization to discharge) and 5.3.1 (permit year defined).

3. Comment: General. The number and magnitude of the requirements in the first permit year are too substantial for municipal personnel and budgets. This problem will be further exacerbated if the final permit is issued during fiscal year 2010 or 2011, since the cost of implementing these Year 1 permit requirements has not been incorporated into the current operating budgets (Note: The FY2011 budget is set to be approved by Winchester Town Meeting in April 2010).

Recommendation: Move a selection of Year 1 requirements back to Year 2 in order to allow permittees reasonable time to complete parts 1.7-1.10 in addition to the multitude of tasks currently requested for Year 1. A suggestion would be to make the focus of Year 1 the written Stormwater Management Program (SWMP), including the requirements of Part 1.10, and also related written protocols/procedures located throughout the permit that are required to be developed and incorporated into the SWMP. The focus of Year 2 could then be implementation of many of the Good Housekeeping/Pollution Prevention tasks required by 2.4.7.1-2.4.7.2. This suggestion would provide far more reasonable and balanced deadlines for municipal budgets, which are typically developed at least six months prior to the start of the upcoming fiscal year.

4. Comment: Part 1.10. The permittee is required to develop a written SWMP within 120 days following the permittee's receipt of authorization from EPA to discharge under the

permit. There are a number of items required under the permit that must be incorporated into the SWMP that have a longer lead time than 120 days.

Recommendation: Provide clarification regarding EPA's intent for the SWMP and how often modification of the SWMP is required. As indicated above, a suggestion would be to make the focus of Year 1 completion of the written SWMP, including the requirements of Part 1.10, and also related written protocols/procedures located throughout the permit that are required to be developed and incorporated into the SWMP.

5. Comment: Part 2.1.1.c. The proposed requirement to eliminate conditions causing or contributing to the exceedance of water quality standards within 60 days of becoming aware of such exceedance is not reasonable, given the large number of potential sources and the potential need to design, fund, construct, and implement new BMPs.

Recommendation: Part 2.1.1.c should be revised to require the permittee to develop and implement a plan and schedule to *investigate* the potential condition(s) causing or contributing to an exceedance of water quality standards within 60 days. Once the conditions are identified, the permittee should provide a schedule for eliminating the condition(s), including as required designing, constructing, and implementing BMPs and/or taking appropriate actions to promptly eliminate illicit discharges that are contributing to the condition.

6. Comment: Part 2.3.2.1. The requirement for each new discharge to impaired waters without a TMDL to have an Individual Permit does not make sense for municipalities or EPA/DEP. Communities where growth and/or redevelopment are occurring could conceivably have a large number of Individual Permits, causing an unnecessary administrative burden on all parties.

Recommendation: Delete the requirement for all new discharges to have an Individual Permit. Instead, add specific clauses into the General Permit similar to that done for TMDLs, and provide EPA discretion to require an Individual Permit if deemed necessary to add controls over and above those provided by the MS4 General Permit.

7. Comment: Part 2.3.3.f. The requirement for each new discharge to outstanding resource waters to have an Individual Permit does not make sense for municipalities or EPA/DEP. Communities where significant growth and/or redevelopment are occurring could conceivably have a large number of Individual Permits, causing an unnecessary administrative burden on all parties.

Recommendation: Delete the requirement for all new discharges to have an Individual Permit. Instead, add specific clauses into the General Permit similar to that done for TMDLs, and provide EPA discretion to require an Individual Permit where deemed necessary to add controls over and above those provided by the MS4 General Permit.

8. Comment: Part 2.4.4.4. The requirement to evaluate the sources of non-stormwater discharges in Part 1.4 of the permit and determine whether these sources are significant contributors of pollutants to the municipal system is not detailed enough. There is also no timeframe provided for completion of this task.

Recommendation: Provide further guidance regarding how these sources are to be evaluated and a timeframe for completion of this task. A suggestion would be to limit the

evaluation to only those non-stormwater discharges that may be encountered during implementation of the IDDE program.

9. Comment: Part 2.4.4.8.c. The timeframe provided for delineating, ranking, prioritizing and inventorying problem catchments is not reasonable. All items need to be completed one year from the effective date of the permit. However, mapping of the MS4 does not have to be completed for two years from the effective date of the permit. It is impossible for catchments to be delineated, ranked, prioritized, and inventoried if mapping of the MS4 is not complete.

Recommendation: Based on the timeframe provided for mapping; delineating, ranking, prioritizing and inventorying problem catchments should be completed during Year 3 of the permit at the earliest. The timeline for completion of IDDE Program Milestones as outlined in Part 2.4.4.8.g. of the permit should be extended to accommodate this change in schedule.

10. Comment: Part 2.4.4.8.e. The permittee is required to develop and implement mechanisms and procedures designed to prevent illicit discharges and Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs). A timeframe is not provided for implementation of these procedures. The permit also does not indicate where this task must be documented whether in the SWMP and/or Annual Reports.

Recommendation: Provide clarification regarding a timeframe for completion of this task and provide information regarding required documentation.

11. Comment: Part 2.4.4.8.h. The requirement to train employees annually on the illicit discharge detection and elimination (IDDE) program does not specify what employees must be included in the training. To require the MS4 to train “all” employees would not be reasonable, nor is there any measurable benefit to training staff not in a position to have involvement in the IDDE program or opportunity to encounter illicit discharges.

Recommendation: Language should be added to Part 2.4.4.8.h of the permit to set reasonable expectations for types of employees or department who should receive the IDDE training.

12. Comment: Part 2.4.6.7. Permittees are required to develop a report assessing current street design and parking lot guidelines and other local requirements that affect the creation of impervious cover. The permit does not indicate whether this is a separate report that needs to be completed or whether it only needs to be part of the SWMP. The SWMP must be completed within 120 days which does not fit the timeline for completion of this task. In addition, the permit does not provide any guidance as to how municipalities should balance reduction of impervious area against potential detrimental impacts to public safety, traffic, etc.

Recommendation: Clarification should be provided in the permit as to whether the permittee is required to develop a separate report. The timeline for completion should also be clarified as it relates to development of the SWMP. EPA should provide further guidance in the permit or a separate guidance document as to how municipalities should balance the benefits and detriments of reduced impervious areas.

13. Comment: Part 2.4.6.8. Permittees are required to develop a report assessing existing local regulations to determine the feasibility of incorporating green practices when

appropriate site conditions exist. The permit does not indicate whether this is a separate report that needs to be completed or whether it only needs to be part of the SWMP. The SWMP must be completed within 120 days which does not fit the timeline for completion of this task.

Recommendation: Clarification should be provided in the permit as to whether the permittee is required to develop a separate report. The timeline for completion should also be clarified as it relates to development of the SWMP.

14. Comment: Part 2.4.6.9.c-d. EPA's requirement for permittees to reduce the frequency, volume, and peak intensity of stormwater discharges from existing MS4-owned properties and infrastructure is not reasonable or justifiable. If discharges from the MS4 contain no pollutants in excess of water quality standards and cause no excessive erosion or scour, then there is neither a need for, nor legal justification to require, these discharges to be retrofitted with flow-control BMPs.

Recommendation: Add language to items 2.4.6.9.c-d limiting the requirement for inventory, ranking, and implementation of flow-control BMPs to only those properties or outfalls with a known water quality problem or erosion impact.

15. Comment: Part 2.4.7. Many of the requirements included as part of the Good Housekeeping and Pollution Prevention minimum control measure are extremely onerous to those communities that lack resources and have limited operating budgets. For many of the items, it is not possible to make the repairs required in the allotted timeframe especially when funds to make these repairs have to be incorporated into municipal fiscal budgets ahead of time.

Recommendation: Extend timeframes provided to make necessary repairs. Reduce the extent of requirements to make them more manageable for communities given their current limited resources.

16. Comment: Part 2.4.7.1.b. The requirement that floor drains in all municipal facilities must be inventoried and the permittee must ensure that all floor drains are not connected to the MS4 within six months of the effective date of the permit is not feasible. As written, this would include every floor drain in every municipal facility, of which some municipalities have many. This would be a time-consuming and costly task to complete.

Recommendation: Revise Part 2.4.7.1.b. to extend the timeframe for completion of this task. Provide information regarding acceptable methods for ensuring that floor drains are not connected to the MS4.

17. Comment: Part 2.4.7.1.d.i. requires the permittee to establish, within six months of the effective date of the permit, a program to repair and rehabilitate its MS4 infrastructure. This requirement is vague and requires additional clarification. For example, is EPA looking for municipalities to demonstrate that they have a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for their MS4 or is EPA looking for a comprehensive condition assessment and associated improvement plan? The latter would be far too costly for the permittees.

The phrase "to reduce or eliminate the discharge of pollutants from the MS4" is vague - to what extent must a program reduce or eliminate the discharge of pollutants? Would this obligation to reduce or eliminate apply to MS4s where water quality standards are met?

Also, the second sentence of this provision appears to be incomplete.

Recommendation: Revise Part 2.4.7.1.d.i to clarify the requirements of this proposed repair and rehabilitation program. Development of a comprehensive condition assessment of all MS4 infrastructure would be cost prohibitive and unrealistic within the six month timeframe.

18. Comment: Part 2.4.7.1.d.iii. The requirement that cleaning and maintenance of catch basins shall be optimized so that no sump is more than 50 percent full for those catch basins tributary to impaired waters is unrealistic. In some communities, all catch basins are tributary to impaired waters so this requirement would extend to every catch basin in Town. In addition, in many communities, older catch basins may have dirt bottoms making it difficult to determine when they are half full. There is also not enough detail provided in the permit regarding how often catch basins would need to be inspected. This requirement would have huge cost implications based on how frequently the catch basins would need to be inspected.

Recommendation: Revise Part 2.4.7.1.d.iii to require catch basins to be inspected in conjunction with routine cleanings only and not at separate intervals. During routine cleanings, the amount of sediment removed will be documented and a determination can be made regarding how frequently catch basins need to be cleaned going forward. The entire five year permit term should be allotted to complete simultaneous inspection and cleaning of all catch basins to develop an appropriate schedule for future catch basin cleanings.

19. Comment: Part 2.4.7.1.d.viii. The requirement that “All permittee-owned stormwater structures shall be inspected annually at a minimum” is not feasible. As written, this would include every pipe, manhole, catch basin, or other structure making up the entirety of the MS4 facilities. This is likely not EPA’s intent.

Recommendation: Revise Part 2.4.7.d.viii to require inspection of all structural BMPs as listed in the permit. If inspection of additional structures is desired, list those specifically, but delete “all” structures.

20. Comment: Part 2.4.7.2.b.v. requires that all areas of facilities that are exposed to stormwater and all stormwater control measures be inspected on a quarterly basis. Quarterly inspections are excessive.

Recommendation: Revise Part 2.4.7.b.v. to require that facility inspections occur annually rather than quarterly.

21. Comment: Part 3.1.4. The permittee-specific monitoring plan to reduce the number of outfalls monitored should also be applied to dry-weather sampling. If a permittee completed dry-weather sampling under the MS4-2003 consistent with the requirements of the draft MS4-2010, the permittee should be able to utilize this data to reduce the frequency of dry-weather monitoring at outfalls where prior monitoring has demonstrated that no discharge of pollutants is occurring. The Town of Winchester, for example, completed two rounds of dry weather inspection/sampling at all of its outfalls during the 2003 permit cycle, with the most recent being completed in 2007/2008. Winchester should be able to use these results to limit or eliminate completely the need for dry-weather screening during the next permit cycle.


Recommendation: Add a new Part 3.1.5 to the permit detailing the allowable conditions under which a permittee can develop within year one of the permit a permittee-specific monitoring plan for dry weather that reduces the number of outfalls monitored based on a set of conditions such as past monitoring data. Include a requirement for the permittee to periodically revisit these outfalls (once every five to ten years) to ensure that no new pollutant sources are present.

22. *Comment:* Part 3.3.1. The requirements related to wet-weather monitoring are not provided in sufficient detail. Inspection must be performed during wet weather, defined as sufficient intensity to produce a discharge; however, it is not clear whether a discharge must be observed at every outfall to achieve compliance. Does the permittee have to return to an outfall repeatedly until a discharge is actually observed, even when substantial rainfall events have occurred? To require the permittee to mobilize staff, equipment, and laboratory services an unlimited number of times to actually observe each and every outfall flowing, places an unreasonable burden upon the permittee. In addition, a storm of sufficient intensity and duration to allow flow to be observed at every outfall is not likely occur with sufficient regularity to facilitate compliance, particularly in MS4s with large numbers of outfalls.

Recommendation: Set specific minimum storm parameters so that the permittee can make a reasonable determination as to whether to mobilize for the wet-weather inspection effort. Set the minimum storm parameters at a level expected to produce discharges at the majority of outfalls. Eliminate the requirement for discharges to be observed at each and every outfall.

The Town of Winchester thanks you for the opportunity to comment on the draft permit requirements. It is our hope that at the end of this public comment period EPA will work closely with municipalities and state officials to modify the draft permit in such a way that is sensitive to the current economic realities facing Massachusetts communities, while at the same time making progress towards improving water quality in our local waterbodies.

Very truly yours,



Brian P. O'Connor, Chairman
Winchester Board of Selectmen

cc: Congressman Ed Markey
State Senator Patricia Jehlen
State Representative Jason Lewis
Board of Selectmen
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