

## **RESPONSE TO COMMENTS**

### **NPDES PERMIT No. MA0102431 Town of Hardwick, Massachusetts Hardwick-Wheelwright WPCF**

On January 17, 2006, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) released for public notice and comment a draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit developed pursuant to an application from the Town of Hardwick, Massachusetts for the reissuance of its permit to discharge wastewater to the designated receiving water, the Ware River. The public comment period for this draft permit expired on February 17, 2006. Comments were received from Mr. Bruce Evans, Superintendent, of the Hardwick Water Pollution Control Facility in a letter dated February 8, 2006, and Ms. Cindy Delpapa, Stream Ecologist, of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Riverways Program in a letter dated February 13, 2006.

After a review of the comments received, EPA has made a final decision to issue the permit authorizing this discharge. The following are the comments and EPA's response to those comments, including changes that have been made to the final permit from the draft as a result of the comments. The comment letters are part of the administrative record and are paraphrased herein. A copy of the final permit may be obtained by writing or by calling Mark Malone, EPA NPDES Permits Program (CMP), 1 Congress Street, Suite 1100, Boston, MA 02114-2023; telephone: (617) 918-1619.

Comments received from Mr. Bruce Evans, Superintendent, Hardwick WPCF:

#### *Comment 1*

*The Town presently employs two full-time certified operators to operate the two Town wastewater treatment facilities. The operators provide normal coverage during the week and only necessary permit and operational duties on the weekend and holidays on a rotating basis. The increase in Total Residual Chlorine (TRC) sampling frequency from 1/day to 2/day will force the Town to hire additional staff or rearrange schedules to provide the full coverage required by the permit seven days a week. This will place a significant burden on the users of the treatment facility. In addition, the Town of Hardwick is in the process of hiring an engineer to upgrade to a flow paced sodium hypochlorite disinfection system which will minimize the potential of TRC exceedances. The Town is therefore requesting relief from the 2/day TRC sampling requirement on weekends and holidays*

#### Response 1

We have considered the Town's request and the relatively high dilution factor of 219 for this facility and we have concluded that the additional sample on weekends and holidays may not provide a proportional increase in benefit. Therefore, language has been added to the permit specifying that only 1/day sampling is necessary on weekends and holidays. However, in order to clarify that sampling requirement, the final permit also specifies that when two samples are to

be taken one sample shall be taken at the beginning of the scheduled work day and the other sample taken after noon.

Comments received from Cindy Delpapa, Stream Ecologist, of the Massachusetts Riverways Program:

*Comment 2*

*The Whole Effluent Toxicity tests are scheduled for twice per year, in May and November. Are the test dates chosen to coordinate with other point dischargers to the watershed? It would be preferred to conduct tests when the river is most stressed in the spring when early life stages are present and in late summer when the river may be at its most stressed.*

Response 2

As suggested, WET test dates are scheduled to coordinate with other dischargers in a watershed. For the Chicopee River Basin, the available test dates are February, May, August, and November. The draft permit maintained the same semiannual test dates as in the current permit. Upon consideration, we believe that a May test date is preferable to February but agree that a late summer test date (August) would be better than one in late autumn (November). Consequently, the final permit requires WET testing in May and August.

*Comment 3*

*The Gilbertville facility has the same WET limitations as the Wheelwright facility although it has about one fifth the dilution.*

Response 3

The 100% WET limitation for the Wheelwright facility is the same as in the current permit and is more stringent than the 50% limit recommended in the toxicity strategy for facilities with a dilution factor greater than 100.

*Comment 4*

*The draft permit changes the bacteria and chlorine limitations from year round to a seasonal limit in effect from April 1 to October 31. It should be noted that the Ware River is a popular whitewater destination for kayakers in the late winter and early spring. Because no reasonable risk is present due to the high flows and significant dilution occurs during this time, extending the chlorination period does not appear necessary. However, some consideration might be given to performing additional bacteria testing in March to determine if there is potential for a human health threat.*

#### Response 4

The waterbody uses are determined by the State. In consultation with the State it has been determined that bacteria testing in March is not required. Consequently, the seasonal limit for fecal coliform remains the same as in the draft permit.

#### *Comment 5*

*The phosphorus and dissolved orthophosphorus reporting requirements are good additions to the permit especially considering the decision not to impose phosphorus limits at this time. Although this facility has considerable dilution, high concentrations of phosphorus from this facility have been noted. It is hoped that the permit will be reopened should data show this facility to have a real potential to contribute to phosphorus loadings to the river and downstream.*

#### Response 5

If numeric water quality criteria are adopted, a TMDL is completed, or new water quality information shows that a more stringent limit is necessary, the permit may be reopened and modified.

#### *Comment 6*

*The draft permit required nitrogen testing twice per year but the dates are not specified. We advocate that the permit specify dates for this nutrient testing on a similar schedule throughout the watershed and testing coincide with the monthly phosphorus testing.*

#### Response 6

We agree and language specifying nitrogen testing dates has been added to the final permit.