

February 17, 2009

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Industrial Permits Branch-CIP
Attn: Thelma Murphy
One Congress Street/Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Comments on the Draft General Permits for Storm Water Discharges from
Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS 4s)

Ms Murphy,

The Town of Hollis, New Hampshire has an estimated population of 7,800. Hollis has neither a municipal drinking water nor a municipal sewer system. The Town's residents depend on septic systems and private wells. Hollis has very little industry and a very small business and commercial base. Hollis is a residential and agricultural town.

Hollis's regulated MS 4 area comprises approximately 1,360 acres, or about 7% of the Town. The Town has fifty-eight (58) full employees. Of these fifty-eight, fourteen (14) work for the Public Works Department. These are the men and women who are responsible for maintaining the Town's road system, the solid waste disposal facilities and the municipal buildings and grounds. They are the ones who must bear the burden of making sure that the Town complies with the new permit requirements.

During the first permit cycle, Hollis implemented its storm water program Town wide. Because of the current economic and financial climate, and the expanded requirements of the new permit, as proposed, Hollis has neither the personnel, nor the budget, to continue to implement its program throughout the Town.

I would ask that the Environmental Protection Agency consider not only what it is trying to accomplish, but also how it intends to accomplish its clean water goals by making compliance requirements so burdensome to small towns that they can no longer implement their storm water programs town wide.

In comparison to surrounding towns and cities, Hollis is, and has been, ahead of the curve when it comes to protection of water resources. Our local ordinances and regulations to protect aquifers, wetlands and surface waters have been in effect, and effective, since the late nineties.

The Town of Hollis will continue to do its best to comply with the new permit requirements. However, during this new permit cycle, the Town will focus only on the regulated area, and make every effort to meet the basic requirements.

Please see the attached comments regarding specific areas of concern. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cathy Hoffman,
Town of Hollis, Storm Water Coordinator

The following areas of the draft permit are of specific concern to the Town of Hollis.

- The draft permit represents a significant expansion in local responsibility for managing and improving local storm water quality. As currently drafted, the revised MS4 storm water discharge permit will tax the financial and staff resources of the Town of Hollis in order to achieve a basic level of compliance. Due to current economic conditions, these will be a challenge to achieve.
- The draft permit establishes a variety of new measurable goals, routine water quality monitoring and site inspection requirements coupled with broadened annual reporting requirements. In order to contain costs and establish a manageable workload within the terms of the modified federal permit, the Town of Hollis will be compelled to alter its current storm water management strategy which has been generally applied town wide to now instead focus our compliance efforts primarily on the regulated permit area. As a result, the storm water management program will now focus on less than 25% of the Town.
- The need to identify, monitor and prevent the further degradation of impaired waterways is beyond the technical capabilities of the Town of Hollis. The requirement to manage this task creates the need for the Town to seek outside technical assistance. Will EPA or DES offer technical support and assistance to aid regulated communities? Barring outside agency assistance, this requirement represents another significant cost to the community.
- In Section 2.3 of the draft permit, EPA states that “the permittee shall reduce the discharges of pollutants from the MS4 to the maximum extent practicable.” This phrase is not defined, but can be broadly interpreted. Can EPA clarify this term? How can a community demonstrate that they have made a good faith effort to comply with this requirement?