



July 2, 2014

Brent Jones, P.E.
Office of Pollution Control
Chief of TMDL and Modeling Branch
Mississippi Dept. of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 2261
Jackson, Ms 39225

RE: NPDES MS0045446 Jackson County Utility Authority, West Jackson County POTW

Dear Brent:

On behalf of the Gulf Restoration Network (GRN), I am writing to submit comments on the re-issuance of permit number MS0045446 for the Jackson County Utility Authority, West Jackson County POTW in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. The GRN is a coalition of local, regional, and national groups that are dedicated to protecting and restoring the resources of the Gulf of Mexico. The GRN submits this comment on behalf of its members in Mississippi who are concerned with the metals entering Coastal waters and with their effect on water quality in Costophia Bayou.

I reviewed the files of this treatment plant at the DEQ public records room and found three points of interest that raised questions. They are as follows:

Quarterly WET Testing and the Toxicity Reduction Evaluation Plan Instituted Upon Failure.

The permit rationale dated April 25, 2014, denotes two failed bioassay results in the plant's short-term chronic WET tests. The submitted bioassay on Ceriodaphnia dubia and Pimephale promelas showed a failure in April 2013 and a failure in November 2013, both in regard to the Ceriodaphnia dubia.

It is clear that this plant needs to alter its practices in some way to be able to pass future WET tests. The proposed permit grapples with the problem by instituting a requirement of quarterly WET testing. In the event that the plant fails one of the WET tests, that is, the test indicates the IC25 is less than 100%, the plant must conduct a follow-up test with the organism that failed within 30 days. If the plant passes the follow-up test, no further action must be taken and the plant will resume the scheduled quarterly testing. However, if the plant consequently fails the follow-up test, the permit indicates that a Toxicity Reduction

Evaluation Plan must be submitted within 45 days. No explanation or parameters of this "TREP" were given so it is unclear what it will entail.

Therefore, according to the current permit language, the plant has the chance to fail two WET tests before any action is required from them. In our research we discovered a nearby plant, the Long Beach/Pass Christian Wastewater Treatment Facility, which also recently failed one organisms' WET test. Their renewal permit addressed the failure, which they attribute to high Ammonia levels, but reducing their limits from 5.5 mg/l (May-October) and 8.0 mg/l (November-April) to 2.48 mg/l.

Ammonia Toxicity

The plant in question has had a problem with Ammonia toxicity in previous years. The Memorandum labeled "Attachment 1" in the permit rationale dated September 2, 2009, noted, "Records indicate the facility may have come close to an acutely toxic situation in February 2007." However, a phone conversation with the permit writer, Sandeepa Gill, revealed that she does not believe the Ammonia to be the problem, but rather she points to the multiple chemical analysis failures with Chromium HEX and copper.

Please explain why you have chosen to implement quarterly testing without adjusting or implementing any parameters for the metals which have clearly caused problems in the last year. How is the plant being held accountable if no regulations are to be changed?

Anti-degradation Report

This permit appears to be allowing an expansion of treatment capacity. Does this require an anti-degradation review. If it does, we would like to see the anti-degradation review that is being relied upon for this action.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

Katherine Curry
Water Policy Legal Intern
Gulf Restoration Network

Andrew Whitehurst
Water Policy Director
Gulf Restoration Network

