

Monongahela Basin

Overflow Control Facilities Demonstration Project Monongahela Basin Working Group September 18, 2006

Attendees:

Allegheny County Health Department
Allegheny County Department of Economic Development
Department of Environmental Protection
Homestead Borough
Munhall Borough
Munhall Resident
Pennsylvania Environmental Council
RIDC of Southwestern Pennsylvania
Riverlife Task Force
Sierra Club
Student Conservation Association
Three Rivers Wet Weather
Valley Mirror
West Mifflin Sanitary Sewer Municipal Authority
Whitaker Borough

Presenters:

ALCOSAN staff: Arletta Scott Williams
Dave Borneman
Jan Oliver
ALCOSAN consultant: Greg Heath, Metcalf and Eddy/AECOM

Presentation Overview

- Arletta Scott Williams, Executive Director of ALCOSAN, welcomed the members of the Working Group, thanked them for their participation, and explained the purpose of the meeting. Ms. Williams invited participants to introduce themselves.
- David Borneman presented an overview of ALCOSAN. He explained that ALCOSAN provides wastewater treatment services to 83 communities, including the City of Pittsburgh, serving a population of just under 96,500. Mr. Borneman noted that ALCOSAN, formed in 1946, is a non-profit entity, not a County agency, governed by a 7-member Board of Directors and financed solely through user charges. The ALCOSAN system consists of over ninety miles of interceptor sewers and over 300 Wet Weather Overflow structures. ALCOSAN's treatment plant is the largest wastewater treatment facility in the Ohio valley.
- Jan Oliver, of ALCOSAN, outlined the wet weather sewage overflow issue. She explained that combined sewer systems carry both sewage and storm water. During wet weather, excess water overloads the sewer system and results in sewage overflows into area creeks, streams and rivers. Sewage overflow must be controlled to ensure rivers that are safe for recreation and attractive for development as well as to comply with State and Federal environmental regulations. Ms. Oliver explained that ALCOSAN and the communities served by it will be working together to address the issue. Fixing the combined sewage

overflow problem will involve four strategies: increased conveyance; increased treatment; storage; and source control. Sewer rates will increase over time to bring the system into compliance. Clearly, collaboration between ALCOSAN, the municipalities served by ALCOSAN, the regulatory agencies, and the public will help to reduce the cost of compliance.

- Greg Heath, of AECOM, presented an overview of the Combined Sewer Overflow Demonstration Project. He explained that the project goals are to:
 - Comply with Combined Sewage Overflow policy;
 - Improve water quality;
 - Control solid and floatable material;
 - Demonstrate effective disinfection;
 - Design a remote facility for intermittent operation; and
 - Design a system that requires low maintenance.

Mr. Heath explained the process for engaging the municipalities and the public in the project and that the Working Groups were being convened early in the project. He noted that the consultant team is currently involved in gaining system understanding. This includes mapping the collection system, performing site inspections, monitoring and sampling flows, and examining collection system models.

The project team is also exploring project siting options and will be presenting those options at the next set of Working Group meetings. Through an understanding of the system and site option characteristics, the project team will develop Overflow Control Facilities alternatives. Mr. Heath also noted that the alternatives will be evaluated based on total project cost, cost versus performance analyses, and other, non-monetary factors.

Finally, Mr. Heath explained the project schedule and the junctures at which the Working Groups will provide review and input. There will be Working Group meetings convened for reviewing:

- Siting options;
 - Alternatives developed; and
 - Evaluations of alternatives.
- Arletta Scott Williams closed the presentation with a brief recap of the role of the Working Groups in ensuring meaningful public involvement at key points throughout the project. She then fielded the following questions and comments from the Working Group members.

Working Group Questions/Comments

Could this project impede economic development in the area?

This project assists ALCOSAN and the communities to meet compliance with wet weather overflow regulations. Noncompliance could impede economic development.

Is there a target date for ALCOSAN's signing of the Consent Decree?

ALCOSAN has been busy negotiating the agreement. The process is hoped to be concluded by the end of 2006.

Of the four ways described to fix the sewage overflow problem, which approach produces the "biggest fix?"

The "biggest/best" fix is site specific and the Regional Plan will include a combination of all four.

Is there a storage facility proposed in the M-49 area?

An overflow control facility with storage as we mentioned is one of the four fixes being examined for that area.

Has a site been determined for the facility?

No specific site has been identified.

Could the facility be in the Carrie Furnace site?

That is being examined along with the rest of the project area.

Why are Braddock and Rankin not represented here?

Representatives of the boroughs were invited to attend.

Shouldn't engineers be represented here?

ALCOSAN has already assembled a highly competent engineering team to evaluate the alternatives.

Is the purpose of this project to demonstrate facilities for all 300 Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)?

This is a demonstration project and the facility would not be needed at every CSO. Point of clarification: there are 260, not 300, CSOs.

Is this project examining models that could be replicated throughout the system?

Yes, if the model is effective.

What is the overall cost of the regional plan?

The estimates have been as high as \$1 Billion.

Is the Rendell Administration allocating funding for sewer projects?

State funding for sewer projects has been received by the 3 Rivers Wet Weather Demonstration Program. Also, 3 Rivers Wet Weather Demonstration Program received Federal funding and has identified upgrades to the municipal sewer tributary to the proposed overflow control facility to assist the municipalities.

Will sewage rates go up in order to bring the system into compliance? Will they go back down again?

Yes, the rates will increase and they will not go back down. As of January 1, 2007, rates could increase as much as 10%. In conjunction with the Regional Long Term Wet Weather Control Plan development, a financing strategy will be developed.

What is the picture, nationally, on rates? Where do we fit in?

We are well below the national average.

Why are the other parts of the country paying more?

They are already taking measures to go into compliance. We are further from compliance than they are.

Where do the water companies fit in to this project?

There is no particular role, other than water quality compliance. In order for us to address contextual impact, we need to have an understanding of the system. For example, how does this fit into new regulations regarding storm water management.

If runoff decreases, does the need for these treatment facilities decrease?

Yes

Is it possible to get cost estimates on what other communities have done to come in to compliance?

This will be looked into as the project progresses.

Will property have to be acquired? Would eminent domain be utilized?

Yes, and yes, if necessary.

Are there incentives or benefits to these facilities?

There are examples of improvements that have been made around these facilities, such as a playground or other recreational space.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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