



## *Draft Policy Issued by EPA*

# **Blending of Sewage Treatment Effluent Addressed**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed a policy addressing the practice of blending by publicly owned sewage treatment plants during high flow caused by heavy precipitation. Public comments concerning this policy will be accepted until January 9, 2004.

Heavy rainfall or snowmelt often causes higher than normal flows into sewage treatment plants due to the combination of sanitary and stormwater sewer systems and/or the introduction of groundwater into the system due to deteriorating pipes. In order to deal with the increased flow, many sewage treatment plants practice blending where primary treatment is used for all flows entering the facility and secondary treatment is used up to the level of capacity. Excess flows are diverted around the secondary treatment units and later blended with the flows treated by the secondary units. This blended effluent is then disinfected and discharged.

Due to a number of requests from municipalities and others, the EPA has proposed this policy to help clarify how the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations apply to wet weather blending.

The policy, as presently proposed, will have the following effects on local sewage plant facilities:

- Blended discharges must meet permit limits that are based on secondary treatment standards or any more stringent limitations necessary to attain water quality standards, including appropriate pathogen-indicator limitations.
- Permits must include monitoring requirements for blended discharges to evaluate compliance with permit limits. In addition, the permit should require monitoring to assess potential water quality impacts and to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment process on key pollutants, including pathogens; and to characterize the level of key pollutants in ambient waters.
- The policy indicates that discharges of blended flows to sensitive waters should not be authorized wherever physically possible and economically achievable.

The final discharge from any sewage treatment facility must continue to meet the terms of the NPDES permit. The blending policy applies only when the final discharge meets all permit limits. Other conditions applied to blending include:

- Limiting the use of blending to times when the capacity of biological units is fully utilized.
- Not allowing sewage treatment facilities to blend during dry weather.
- Requiring appropriate operating and maintenance of the collection system to reduce high flows
- Ensure the use of monitoring.

To read the draft policy and find out how to submit comments go to [www.epa.gov/npdes/blending](http://www.epa.gov/npdes/blending). For more information on this and other subjects concerning wastewater effluent or NPDES please contact Gary McCollum, ([gmcollum@daa.com](mailto:gmcollum@daa.com)) at (540) 552-0444, or Bill Kreye at ([bkreye@daa.com](mailto:bkreye@daa.com)) at (804) 264-2228.

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