



BLUE PLAINS REGIONAL COMMITTEE

777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 300 • Washington, D.C. 20002-4239 • (202) 962-3200 • FAX (202) 962-3203

District of Columbia

Fairfax County

Montgomery County

Prince George's County

Washington Suburban
Sanitary Commission

October 4, 2006

Ms. Mary M. Letzkus
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region III
Office of Watersheds (3WP41)
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

RE: Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant – NPDES Permit No. DC0021199
Comments on August 18, 2006 Draft Permit for Public Notice

Dear Ms. Letzkus,

As chairman of the Blue Plains Regional committee (BPRC) I am submitting the following comments regarding the August 18, 2006 proposed modifications to the Blue Plains National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit on behalf of the BPRC. As you are aware, the BPRC represents the interests of the Blue Plains Users (i.e., the District of Columbia; Fairfax County, Virginia; Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, Maryland; and the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission) as defined under the terms of the 1985 Blue Plains Intermunicipal Agreement.

The Blue Plains Users have a vested interest in any proposed NPDES permit conditions that may directly or indirectly affect the Blue Plains plant. We therefore wish to add our full support for the formal comments submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC-WASA). We believe that EPA should address DC-WASA's comments and recommendations, which are summarized below, before finalizing the draft Blue Plains permit. These issues include:

A. Total Nitrogen Requirements:

The currently proposed permit language includes several requirements related to Total Nitrogen that need to be modified in order to address the following elements:

- 1. The proposed interim nitrogen limit of 8.6 million lbs/yr should be replaced with more appropriate and achievable limits.** It is clear from DC-WASA's performance data that this proposed interim limit is unrealistic given the many operational constraints Blue Plains continues to operate under now, and is expected to experience over the next several years. These constraints include expected increases in incoming flows and loads simultaneous with extensive process and system upgrades. It is critical to remember that despite the many positive reductions in nitrogen loads that Blue Plains has been able to achieve over the years, that the denitrification process and systems currently in place were never designed to consistently and reliably achieve the nitrogen limits that EPA is proposing. This is especially critical given that the current permit language does not address the many process constraints (i.e., changes in flows, loadings and temperature impacts) that Blue Plains must operate under.

Action: The interim nitrogen permit limits should be changed to be 10.5 million lbs/yr during construction and 9.550 million lbs/yr before and after these process upgrades.

- 2. The current permit language needs to include critical peak flow limits.** As noted, the remarkable success that DC-WASA has had in achieving nitrogen reductions at Blue Plains is related in part to the recognition that as a CSO plant, Blue Plains has to routinely deal with high/variable wet weather peak flows. The current peak flow limits provide DC-WASA with the ability to achieve the necessary balance between treating those peak flows while sustaining a stable and effective denitrification process.

Action: The 511/450 MGD peak flow limits in the current permit should be included in the new permit.

- 3. The proposed nitrogen goal of 5.8 million lbs/yr is unachievable and should be removed.** It is important that EPA provide its technical rationale for proposing any nitrogen requirements, and should not place an additional permit constraint on DC-WASA beyond the interim limit. In addition, it is also clear from DC-WASA's extensive data analysis that this proposed permit goal cannot be consistently achieved.

Action: The proposed interim nitrogen goal of 5.8 million lbs/yr should be deleted.

- 4. A realistic schedule for submitting the nitrogen removal action plan and schedule needs to be agreed to.** As documented by DC-WASA, there are many critical scheduling and timing issues associated with the pilot work and development of engineering plans needed to achieve the ultimate nitrogen reduction limit. DC-WASA has proposed a schedule that should allow sufficient review and input by EPA and still allow for inclusion of an approvable action plan and schedule for the 2008 Blue Plains permit renewal.

Action: The 360 day deadline for submission of the action plan and schedule should be deleted and DC-WASA's proposed 480 day deadline should be substituted.

B. CSO Long-term Control Plan (LTCP) Requirements

The permit language needs to be modified to address the following points:

- 1. The proposed language to expand the water quality compliance requirement at Part III.E.1 goes beyond the requirements of EPA's CSO Policy.** The current language, while limiting the duration of the requirement to the period of the LTCP implementation, places an undue burden and liability exposure to DC-WASA.

Action: The water quality standards compliance requirement from Part III.E.1 should be deleted.

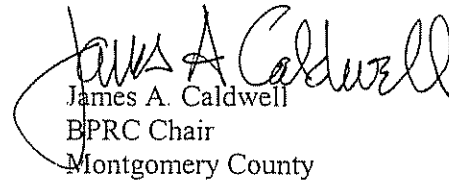
- 2. The TMDL-derived limits for the CSO system in Part II.E.204 exceed the requirements of the CSO Policy and are unnecessary given the existence of LTCP-derived performance standards.**

Action: As planned, all references to the TMDL-derived limits in the current draft permit should be deleted.

On behalf of the BPRC, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important matter. The Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant provides a critical service to the metropolitan Washington region and its citizens, and is a key component of the region's ongoing efforts to protect water quality. It is therefore incumbent upon EPA to take the necessary steps to work with DC-WASA to resolve these key issues before the permit is finalized.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me via Tanya Spano, COG staff, at (202) 962-3776.

Sincerely,



James A. Caldwell
BPRC Chair
Montgomery County

cc: Jerry Johnson, DC-WASA
BPRC members
BPTC members
COG staff