

PUBLIC NOTICE

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

**DIVISION OF COASTAL AND LAND USE PLANNING**

**Proposed amendment to the Upper Delaware Water Quality Management Plan**

**Public Notice**

**Take notice** that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (Department) is seeking public comment on a proposed amendment to the Upper Delaware Water Quality Management (WQM) Plan. This amendment proposal, submitted on behalf of the Township of Liberty as the responsible Wastewater Management Planning Agency, would adopt a future wastewater service area map for the Township of Liberty. This map has been prepared pursuant to P.L. 2011, c. 203, enacted on January 17, 2012, which permits the Wastewater Management Planning Agency to prepare and submit to the Department at least that portion of a wastewater management plan (WMP) designating sewer service area (SSA), which shall comply with the Department's regulatory criteria. If adopted, this map, titled "Future Wastewater Service Area Map" (FWSA map), will supersede all wastewater service area mapping currently contained in the WQM Plan for areas within the Township of Liberty, including that which was adopted into the WQM Plan as part of an approved WMP. The map identifies areas to be served by sewage treatment facilities/sewer systems as well as areas to be served by septic systems with design flows of equal to or less than 2,000 gallons per day.

The proposed FWSA map modifies the previously approved SSA to eliminate environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) that are not currently connected to sewer systems. This proposed amendment only modifies the wastewater service area mapping portions of the above referenced WQM Plan.

Pursuant to P.L. 2011, c. 203, the Department, in consultation with the applicable Wastewater Management Planning Agency, may approve the inclusion of land within a SSA notwithstanding that existing treatment works may not currently have the assured capacity to treat wastewater from such land without infrastructure improvements or permit modification. Therefore, amendments to update a SSA may be approved if such actions are compliant with the applicable sections of the Water Quality Management Planning rules (N.J.A.C. 7:15) regardless of whether capacity has been fully assessed. Additional issues which may need to be addressed for any new or expanded wastewater treatment facility proposal include, but are not limited to, compliance with stormwater regulations, antidegradation, effluent limitations, water quality analysis, and exact locations and designs of future treatment works. Additionally, sewer service to any particular project is subject to contractual allocations between municipalities, authorities, and/or private parties, and is not guaranteed by this amendment.

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-5, ESAs have been assessed to determine what areas are appropriately included in the proposed SSAs. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24, ESAs are defined as contiguous areas of 25 acres or larger consisting of habitat for threatened and endangered species as identified on the Landscape Project Maps of Habitat for Endangered, Threatened or Other Priority Species, Natural Heritage Priority Sites, Category One (C1) special water resource protection areas, and wetlands, alone or in combination. These ESAs are not included in the proposed SSA except as noted below.

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(b)1, to determine areas designated as threatened or endangered species habitat, the Department utilized the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Landscape Project Maps of Habitat for Endangered, Threatened or Other Priority Species, version 2.1 as applicable. Except as provided under N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(e) through (h), areas identified by the Landscape Project as being suitable habitat for threatened and endangered species are not included in the proposed SSA, unless a site has undergone a site specific Habitat Suitability Determination, prepared in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.26, that found the site to be not suitable habitat, or the Department determined, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(g)2, that the ESAs are not critical to a population of endangered or threatened species, the loss of which would decrease the likelihood of the survival or recovery of the identified species.

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(b)2, areas mapped as Natural Heritage Priority Sites are not included in the proposed SSA, except as provided under N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(e) through (h).

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(b)3, areas identified as special water resource protection areas along C1 waters and their tributaries are not included in the proposed SSAs, except as provided under N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(e) through (h). The required buffer width is applied to both sides of a stream measured from the top of bank of an intermittent or perennial stream, or centerline if the bank is not defined, and from the defined edge of a lake, pond or reservoir at bank-full flow or level. C1 waters, their tributaries, and all Highlands open waters are afforded a 300-foot buffer. In addition, as required under N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.20(b)3, the proposed FWSA map text indicates that development in riparian zones, or designated river areas, may be subject to special regulation under Federal or State

statutes or rules. Riparian zones or buffers are established along all surface waters, based on the surface water body's classification designated at N.J.A.C. 7:9B, under the following regulations: the Flood Hazard Area Control Act rules, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act rules, the Stormwater Management rules, and the Water Quality Management Planning rules. Most development within these riparian zones is limited by these regulatory programs.

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(b)4, areas mapped as wetlands pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:9A-1 and 13:9B-25 are not included in the proposed SSA, except as provided under N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(e) through (h).

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(d), areas with Federal 201 grant limitations that prohibit the extension of sewers to serve development in these areas are excluded from the proposed SSA either where local mapped information exists delineating these areas, or through a narrative description where mapping does not exist. Where a narrative approach has been used, it is noted as text on the proposed FWSA map. Pre-existing grant conditions and requirements (from Federal and State grants or loans for sewerage facilities), which provide for restriction of sewer service to ESAs, are unaffected by adoption of this document and compliance is required.

As provided under N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24(e) through (h), limited ESAs have been included in SSAs. Where applicable, Department Permits or Jurisdictional Determinations have been utilized to determine the extent of the SSA on individual lots.

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-3.10, the New Jersey Highlands Council will be provided with an opportunity to review the proposed amendment within the Highlands Region for consistency with the adopted Regional Master Plan (RMP).

This preliminary notice represents the Department's determination that the Township of Liberties' proposed SSA is in compliance with the regulatory criteria for identifying SSAs pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.24 and 5.25. In accordance with P.L. 2011, c. 203, the Department will accept those site specific amendment and revision applications beginning May 16, 2012, the 120th day after the date of enactment. Information regarding application for these amendments and revisions can be found at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/wqmp/applications.html>.

Approval of this amendment would not eliminate the need for any permits, approvals, or certifications required by any Federal, State, county, or municipal review agency with jurisdiction over any project/activity. Approval of this amendment does not provide any implied approval for any other aspects of any project or needed permits and approvals.

**This notice** is being given to inform the public that a plan amendment has been proposed for the Upper Delaware WQM Plan. All information related to the WQM Plan and the proposed amendment is located at the Department, Division of Coastal and Land Use Planning, 401 East State Street, P.O. Box 420, Mail Code 401-07C, Trenton, New Jersey 08625. The Department's file is available for inspection between 8:30 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. An appointment to inspect the documents may be arranged by calling the Division of Coastal and Land Use Planning at (609) 984-6888.

**Interested persons** may submit written comments on the amendment to WQM Program Docket, Division of Coastal and Land Use Planning, at the Department address cited above, with a copy sent to Mr. Eric K. Snyder, Township Planner, 349 Mountain Lake Road, Great Meadows, New Jersey 07838. All comments must be submitted within 30 days following the date of this notice. All comments submitted prior to the close of the comment period shall be considered by the Department in reviewing the amendment request.

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Elizabeth Semple, Manager  
Division of Coastal and Land Use Planning  
Department of Environmental Protection

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Date