

DOCKET NO. D-1986-038 CP-5

DELAWARE RIVER BASIN COMMISSION

**Reading Regional Airport Authority
Wastewater Treatment Plant
Bern Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania**

PROCEEDINGS

This docket is issued in response to an application submitted to the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC or Commission) by Spotts, Stevens and McCoy (SSM) on behalf of the docket holder on December 6, 2024 (Application), for renewal of the docket holder’s existing wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and its discharge. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) issued National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit No. PA0028720 for this discharge.

The application was reviewed for continuation of the project in the Comprehensive Plan and approval under Section 3.8 of the *Delaware River Basin Compact*. The Berks County Planning Commission has been notified of pending action. A public hearing on this project was held by the DRBC on February 4, 2026.

A. DESCRIPTION

- Purpose.** The purpose of this docket is to renew approval of the docket holder’s existing 0.42 million gallons per day (mgd) WWTP and its discharge.
- Location.** The docket holder’s WWTP is located at Bernville Road in Bern Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania. The WWTP will continue to discharge treated effluent to the Schuylkill River, at River Mile 92.47 – 80.3 (Delaware River – Schuylkill River) via Outfall No. 001.

The location of the WWTP outfall in the Schuylkill River Watershed is as follows:

| OUTFALL NO. | LATITUDE (N) | LONGITUDE (W) |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 001 | 40° 22’ 56” | 75° 57’ 10” |

3. **Area Served.** The docket holder's WWTP will continue to serve the Reading Regional Airport, which includes the tenants of three (3) Airport Industrial Parks and contained businesses, the Direct Link Building, and the Riveredge Restaurant. The WWTP also serves the St. Joseph Hospital and Medical Center, Water District (A), and the West Shore Area, which are all located within the limits of Bern Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania. For the purpose of defining the Area Served, the Type of Discharge and the Service Area sections from the docket holder's Application are incorporated herein by reference, to the extent consistent with all other conditions contained in Section C. DECISION of this docket.

4. **Design Criteria.** The docket holder's 0.42 mgd WWTP utilizes a sequencing batch reactor (SBR) treatment process with chlorine disinfection.

The WWTP is designed for an annual average flow of 0.42 mgd, and a hydraulic design capacity of 0.504 mgd.

5. **Facilities.** The WWTP facilities consist of one (1) fine influent screen, one (1) influent wet well, two (2) SBR treatment units, two (2) aerobic digesters, two (2) chlorine contact tanks, one (1) Parshall flume, one (1) sludge dewatering centrifuge, and one (1) sludge holding tank.

Wastewater flows through the fine influent screen entering an equalization tank before it is pumped into the SBR treatment units. The wastewater is then conveyed to the chlorine contact tanks for disinfection and flows through a Parshall flume prior to discharge to the Schuylkill River via Outfall No. 001.

The project facilities are not located in the 100-year floodplain.

Wasted sludge will continue to be hauled off-site for disposal in accordance with the NPDES Permit No. PA0028720.

6. **Water Withdrawals.** The potable water supply in the project service area is provided by the Reading Area Water Authority (RAWA). The RAWA water withdrawal is described in detail in Docket No. D-2000-059 CP-3, which was approved on March 10, 2021.

7. **NPDES Permit / DRBC Effluent Requirements.** NPDES Permit No. PA0028720 issued by the PADEP includes final effluent limitations for the project discharge to surface waters classified by the PADEP as supporting migratory fishes (MF) and warm water fishes (WWF). EFFLUENT TABLE C-1 included in Section C. DECISION condition C.1. of this docket, contains effluent requirements for DRBC parameters that must be met as a condition of this approval. Effluent requirements for Outfall No. 001 are based on a discharge rate of 0.42 mgd.

8. **Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan.** The existing WWTP was included in the Comprehensive Plan by Docket No. D-1986-038 CP on September 17, 1986. The WWTP approval was renewed and/or modified by Docket Nos. D-1986-038 CP-2, D-1986-038 CP-3, and D-1986-038 CP-4, on September 27, 2006, September 12, 2013, and June 12, 2019, respectively. Issuance of this docket (D-1986-038 CP-5) continues the project in the Comprehensive Plan.

B. FINDINGS

The docket holder applied to renew approval of their existing 0.42 mgd WWTP and its discharge.

1. Total Dissolved Solids

Section 3.10.4D.2. of the Commission's *Water Quality Regulations (WQR)* establishes the basin-wide total dissolved solids (TDS) effluent standard as 1,000 mg/l. The Commission's basin-wide in-stream criteria outlines that the TDS concentration of the receiving stream exhibit a resultant of less than 133% of the background TDS concentration, in conjunction with a TDS less than 500 mg/l (Sections 3.10.3B.1b and 3.10.3B.2 of the Commission's *WQR*).

The 133% of the background TDS requirement is implemented for the protection of aquatic life. The 500 mg/l TDS requirement is utilized to protect the use of the receiving stream as a drinking water source; whereas, the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act's secondary standard for TDS is 500 mg/l.

Background TDS is to be the observed concentration of TDS during Q7-10 conditions or, in the absence thereof, an acceptable estimate to the Commission in accordance with Section 3.10.6G of the Commission's *WQR*. A letter from the Commission to the docket holder dated August 4, 2003 established the in-stream background TDS concentration and accompanying Q7-10 flow at the WWTP's discharge as 400 mg/l and 101 mgd, respectively.

Within the referenced letter and Docket Nos. D-1986-38 CP-2 and D-1986-38 CP-3, a variance to the Commission's TDS effluent limit was approved on an average monthly and instantaneous maximum basis of 2,605 mg/l and 5,210 mg/l, respectively. The established in-stream background TDS concentration and Q7-10 low flow evaluated at the docket holder's WWTP existing 0.42 mgd flow does not increase the stream's resultant concentration greater than the Commission's *WQR* criteria. Therefore, this docket continues an average monthly TDS effluent limit of 2,605 mg/l and an instantaneous maximum TDS effluent limit of 5,210 mg/l.

2. Other

At the docket holder's WWTP discharge, the Schuylkill River has an estimated seven-day low flow with a recurrence interval of ten years (Q_{7-10}) of 98.9 mgd (153 cfs). The ratio of this low flow to the hydraulic design wastewater discharge rate from the 0.42 mgd WWTP is approximately 236 to 1 (98.9 mgd/0.42 mgd).

The nearest surface water intake of record for public water supply is located on the Schuylkill River approximately 24 River Miles downstream of the docket holder's WWTP and is operated by the Pottstown Borough Authority.

The project does not conflict with the Comprehensive Plan and is designed to prevent substantial adverse impact on the water resources related environment, while sustaining the current and future water uses and development of the water resources of the Basin.

The effluent limits in the NPDES Permit conform with Commission effluent quality requirements, where applicable.

The project is designed to produce a discharge that meets the effluent requirements as set forth in the Commission's *Water Quality Regulations (WQR)*.

C. DECISION

Effective on the approval date for Docket No. D-1986-038 CP-5 below, the project described in Docket No. D-1986-038 CP-4 is removed from the Comprehensive Plan to the extent that they are not included in Docket No. D-1986-038 CP-5; Docket No. D-1986-038 CP-4 is terminated and replaced by Docket No. D-1986-038 CP-5; and the project and the appurtenant facilities described in Section A "DESCRIPTION" of this docket shall be included in the Comprehensive Plan. The project and appurtenant facilities as described in Section A of this docket are approved pursuant to Section 3.8 of the *Compact*, subject to the following conditions:

Monitoring and Reporting

1. The docket holder shall comply with the requirements contained in the EFFLUENT TABLE below. The docket holder shall submit the required monitoring results electronically to the DRBC Project Review Section via email aemr@drbc.gov on the **Annual Effluent Monitoring Report Form** located at this web address: <https://www.nj.gov/drbc/programs/project/docket-app-info.html#3>. The monitoring results shall be submitted annually, absent any observed limit violations, by January 31. If a DRBC effluent limit is violated, the docket holder shall submit the result(s) to the DRBC within 30 days of the violation(s) and provide a written explanation that states the action(s) the docket holder has taken to correct the violation(s) and protect against any future violations. The following average monthly effluent limits are among those listed in the NPDES Permit and meet or are more stringent than the effluent requirements of the DRBC.

EFFLUENT TABLE C-1: DRBC Parameters Included in NPDES Permit

| OUTFALL No. 001 (Discharging to Schuylkill River) | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| PARAMETER | LIMIT | MONITORING |
| pH (Standard Units) | 6 to 9 at all times | As required by NPDES Permit |
| Dissolved Oxygen | 5.0 mg/l | As required by NPDES Permit |
| Total Suspended Solids | 30 mg/l | As required by NPDES Permit |
| CBOD ₅ (at 20° C) | 25 mg/l 85% Minimum Removal | As required by NPDES Permit |
| BOD ₅ (at 20° C) Influent | Monitor & Report | As required by NPDES Permit |
| Ammonia Nitrogen | 20 mg/l | As required by NPDES Permit |
| Fecal Coliform (5-1 to 9-30) (10-1 to 4-30) | 200 colonies per 100 ml as a geo. avg. 2000 colonies per 100 ml as a geo. avg. | As required by NPDES Permit |
| Total Dissolved Solids* | 2,605 mg/l (Average Monthly) 5,210 mg/l (Instantaneous Max.) | As required by NPDES Permit |

* See DECISION Condition C.3.

2. Except as otherwise authorized by this docket, if the docket holder seeks relief from any limitation based upon a DRBC water quality standard or minimum treatment requirement, the docket holder shall apply for approval from the Executive Director or for a docket revision in accordance with Section 3.8 of the *Compact* and the *Rules of Practice and Procedure*.

3. The docket holder may request permission from the Executive Director to perform specific conductance monitoring in lieu of TDS monitoring. The request shall be made in writing and shall include information that supports the effluent specific correlation between TDS and specific conductance. Upon review, the Executive Director may modify the docket to allow specific conductance monitoring in lieu of TDS monitoring.

4. In accordance with 18 C.F.R. 401.8. of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (RPP), if at any future time the Project is changed materially from the Project as described in this docket, it will be deemed to constitute a new and different project for the purposes of Article 11 of the Delaware River Basin Compact and will require Commission amendment of the Comprehensive Plan. In accordance with the same section of the RPP, whenever a change to the Project is made, the sponsor must advise the Executive Director, who will determine whether the change is deemed materially for purposes of this provision.

5. This approval shall expire on the expiration date set forth below unless prior thereto the docket holder has applied to the Commission to renew or extend this approval.

6. The docket holder is responsible for timely submittal to the DRBC of a docket renewal application on the appropriate application form including the appropriate docket application filing fee (see 18 C.F.R. 401.43) at least 6 months in advance of the docket expiration date set forth below. The docket holder will be subject to late filed renewal surcharges in the event of untimely submittal of its renewal application, whether DRBC issues a reminder notice in advance of the deadline or the docket holder receives such notice. If a timely and complete application for renewal has been submitted and the DRBC is unable, through no fault of the docket holder, to reissue the docket before the expiration date below, the terms and conditions of the current docket will remain fully effective and enforceable pending the grant or denial of the application for docket approval.

7. The docket holder is permitted to treat and discharge wastewater as set forth in the Area Served Section of this docket, which incorporates by reference the Type of Discharge and Service Area sections of the docket holder's Application to the extent consistent with all other conditions of this section. Any expansion beyond that included in Section A.3. Area Served is subject to DRBC review and approval in accordance with Section 3.8 of the Compact.

8. In accordance with the Commission's regulations at 18 C.F.R. Part 440, the docket holder is prohibited from discharging wastewater from high volume hydraulic fracturing ("HVHF") or HVHF-related activities to waters or land within the Basin. The docket holder is further prohibited from discharging hydraulic fracturing wastewater, whether treated or untreated, from sources within or outside the Basin, without obtaining the Commission's prior review and express approval in the form of a revised docket. Violation of this or any condition of this docket approval may result in enforcement, including the risk of financial penalties, pursuant to Section 14.17 of the Delaware River Basin Compact and Section 2.7.8 (18 CFR 401.98) of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure.

9. The facility and operational records shall be available at all times for inspection by the DRBC.

10. The facility shall be operated at all times to comply with the requirements of the Commission's *WQR*.

11. If at any time the receiving treatment plant proves unable to produce an effluent that is consistent with the requirements of this docket approval, no further connections shall be permitted until the deficiency is remedied.

12. Nothing herein shall be construed to exempt the docket holder from obtaining all necessary permits and/or approvals from other State, Federal or local government agencies having jurisdiction over this project.

13. The docket holder shall discharge wastewater in such a manner as to avoid injury or damage to fish or wildlife and shall avoid any injury to public or private property.

14. No sewer service connections shall be made to newly constructed premises with plumbing fixtures and fittings that do not comply with water conservation performance standards contained in Resolution No. 88-2 (Revision 2).

15. The issuance of this docket approval shall not create any private or proprietary rights in the waters of the Basin, and the Commission reserves the right to amend, suspend or rescind the docket for cause, to ensure proper control, use and management of the water resources of the Basin.
16. The docket holder shall be subject to applicable DRBC regulatory program fees, in accordance with duly adopted DRBC resolutions and/or regulations (see 18 C.F.R. 401.43).
17. This approval is transferable by request to the DRBC Executive Director provided that the project purpose and area served approved by the Commission in this docket will not be materially altered because of the change in project ownership. The request shall be submitted on the appropriate form and be accompanied by the appropriate fee (see 18 C.F.R. 401.43).
18. The docket holder shall request a name change of the entity to which this approval is issued if the name of the entity to which this approval is issued changes its name. The request for name change shall be submitted on the appropriate form and be accompanied by the appropriate fee (see 18 C.F.R. 401.43).
19. The Executive Director may modify or suspend this approval or any condition thereof, or require mitigating measures pending additional review, if in the Executive Director's judgment such modification or suspension is required to protect the water resources of the Basin.
20. Any person who objects to a docket decision by the Commission may request a hearing in accordance with Article 6 of the *Rules of Practice and Procedure (RPP)*. In accordance with Section 15.1(p) of the *Delaware River Basin Compact*, cases and controversies arising under the *Compact* are reviewable in the United States district courts.

BY THE COMMISSION

APPROVAL DATE: March 4, 2026

EXPIRATION DATE: February 28, 2032