

DOCKET NO. D-1988-052-6

DELAWARE RIVER BASIN COMMISSION

Discharge to a Tributary of Special Protection Waters

**Grand Central Sanitary Landfill, Inc.
Leachate Treatment Plant
Plainfield Township, Northampton County, Pennsylvania**

PROCEEDINGS

This docket is issued in response to an application submitted to the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC or Commission) on December 22, 2025 (Application) to renew the approval of the docket holder's existing leachate treatment plant (LTP) and its discharge. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) issued National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit No. PA0070483 for this discharge. The PADEP issued the original Water Quality Management Permit No. 4819201 for this facility on February 18, 2005. The PADEP issued Water Quality Management Permit No. 4819201 for the installation of chemical feed equipment at the treatment plant on April 15, 2019. An amendment to the WQM Permit (Permit No. 4804201 A-1) was issued by the PADEP for equipment and process upgrades on June 17, 2021.

The application was reviewed for approval under Section 3.8 of the *Delaware River Basin Compact*. The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has been notified of pending action. A public hearing on this project was held by the DRBC on August 5, 2026.

A. DESCRIPTION

1. Purpose. The purpose of this docket is to renew the approval of the docket holder's existing 0.1 million gallons per day (mgd) Grand Central Sanitary Landfill (GCSL) leachate treatment plant (LTP) and approve equipment and process upgrades. The upgrades consisted of the conversion of the Sequencing Batch Reactor System to a Membrane Bioreactor System and replacing the simplex microfilter (MF) with a duplex ultrafilter (UF).

2. Location. The docket holder's LTP is located on Grand Central Road in Plainfield Township, Northampton County, Pennsylvania. The LTP will continue to discharge treated effluent to an unnamed tributary to Little Bushkill Creek at River Mile 184.1 – 8.5 – 8.1 – 0.1 (Delaware River–Bushkill Creek-Little Bushkill Creek-UNT Little Bushkill Creek) and is located in the drainage area to the Lower Delaware Special Protection Waters (SPW).

The location of the LTP outfall in the Bushkill Creek Watershed is as follows:

OUTFALL NO.	LATITUDE (N)	LONGITUDE (W)
001	40° 50' 38"	75° 15' 57"

3. Area Served. The docket holder's existing 0.1 mgd LTP will continue to treat leachate from the Grand Central Sanitary Landfill.

The docket holder provides solid waste disposal services to residential, commercial and industrial customers mainly in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Approximately one third (1/3) of the waste is from New Jersey and two thirds (2/3) is from Pennsylvania. Approximately 93.2 percent of the waste sent to the landfill originates from sources that are within the Delaware River Basin (DRB).

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 existing LTP is designed to provide the Best Available Treatment (BAT). The treatment process at the plant involves a first stage biological process followed by a second stage physical treatment process. The biological process now consists of MBR's which have replaced the SBR's previously utilized by the LTP. The biological process is used to remove ammonia, BOD and other compounds from the wastewater. The second stage is physical treatment consisting of ultrafiltration and two-part reverse osmosis and is used to remove suspended and dissolved solids. The 2021 LTP upgrades included a change from simplex microfiltration units to the UF units. Prior to processing through the RO units, the leachate pH is adjusted to mitigate membrane fouling and is also treated with an antiscalant and biocide to reduce biological fouling. The maximum hydraulic design capacity of the treatment system is 0.13 mgd. In 2025, the average monthly treated effluent discharge was 0.024 mgd.

The treatment plant is part of an overall leachate management program at the landfill. Due to the quantity and variable nature of leachate generated at the site, the landfill requires several options to accommodate different flow scenarios. Wastewater from the landfill is piped to the LTP where it is treated and discharged to an unnamed tributary to Little Bushkill Creek via Outfall No. 001. The reverse osmosis treatment process generates reject water which is spray applied to the working face and lined portions of the landfill. The docket holder also transports a portion of the reverse osmosis reject water by truck to licensed off-site facilities, including the City of Allentown wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and the Lehigh County Authority WWTP in Fogelsville, Pennsylvania. During periods of abnormally high precipitation, the docket holder also transports untreated effluent to these facilities to maintain sufficient capacity in the influent storage facilities. The docket holder is also permitted to spray apply treated wastewater and raw leachate to the working face and lined portions of the landfill for dust control, but primarily spray applies the reverse osmosis reject water to the lined areas of the landfill for this purpose. The LTP is designed to remove more than 95% of influent BOD and suspended solids.

5. Facilities. The treatment facilities consist of a plate settler system that includes a pre-mix tank, rapid mix tank, a flocculation tank, and a lamella clarifier. From the plate settler system, flow enters into one (1) of two (2) equalization tanks, where it is stored and aerated until pumped into two (2) MRB reactor tanks operating in batch mode. From the MBRs, flow enters into 2 post-SBR equalization tanks, then duplex UF units, then a two-pass reverse osmosis unit. Flow enters 2 post-aeration tanks prior to discharge via Outfall No. 001.

The docket holder has obtained approval from PADEP (WQM Permit No. 4804201 A-1) to convert the Sequencing Batch Reactor System to a Membrane Bioreactor System and replace the simplex microfilter (MF) with a duplex ultrafilter (UF).

The docket holder's LTP discharges to waters classified as SPW and is required to have available standby power. The existing LTP has 3 generators installed capable of providing standby power. The generators are automatically activated whenever the facility loses primary power.

The docket holder's LTP shall have a remote alarm system that continuously monitors plant operations in accordance with the Commission's SPW requirements. The existing LTP is staffed 24 hours per day and has a remote alarm system installed that continuously monitors plant operations and alerts facility personnel.

The docket holder has prepared and implemented an emergency management plan (EMP) for the existing LTP in accordance with Commission SPW requirements.

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

Wasted sludge will continue to be land-filled on-site.

6. NPDES Permit / DRBC Effluent Requirements. NPDES Permit No. PA0070483 issued by the PADEP includes final effluent limitations for the project discharge to surface waters classified by the PADEP as supporting high quality water, cold water fishes and migratory fishes (HQ-CWF/MF). 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 0.1 mgd.

B. FINDINGS

The docket holder applied to renew approval of their existing 0.1 mgd LTP and its discharge.

1. Special Protection Waters

In 1992, the DRBC adopted SPW requirements, as part of the DRBC *Water Quality Regulations (WQR)*, designed to protect existing water quality in applicable areas of the Delaware River Basin. One hundred twenty miles of the Delaware River from Hancock, New York downstream to the Delaware Water Gap has been classified by the DRBC as SPW. This stretch includes the sections of the river federally designated as "Wild and Scenic" in 1978 -- the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River and the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area - - as well as an eight-mile reach between Milrift and Milford, Pennsylvania which is not federally designated. The SPW regulations apply to this 120-mile stretch of the river and its drainage area.

On July 16, 2008, the DRBC approved amendments to its *Water Quality Regulations (WQR)* that provide increased protection for waters that the Commission classifies as SPW. The portion of the Delaware River and its tributaries within the boundary of the Lower Delaware River Management Plan Area was approved for SPW designation.

The docket holder's WWTP discharges to the drainage area to the Lower Delaware SPW. The docket holder's WWTP discharge is required to comply with the SPW requirements, as outlined in Article 3.10.3A.2. of the *WQR*.

Article 3.10.3A.2.e.1). and 2). of the Commission's *WQR* states that projects subject to review under Section 3.8 of the Compact that are located in the drainage area of SPW must submit for approval a Non-Point Source Pollution Control Plan (NPSPCP) that controls the new or increased non-point source loads generated within the portion of the docket holder's service area which is also located within the drainage area of SPW. The service area of the docket holder is located in the drainage area to the SPW. Since this project does not entail additional construction or expansion of facilities and service area and there are no new or increased non-point source loads associated with this approval, the NPSPCP requirement is not applicable at this time. Accordingly, Section C. DECISION condition C.2. has been included in this docket.

2. Other

Near the docket holder's LTP discharge, Little Bushkill Creek has an estimated seven-day low flow with a recurrence interval of ten years (Q_{7-10}) of 0.407 mgd (0.63 cfs). The ratio of this low flow to the average design wastewater discharge from the 0.1 mgd LTP is 4.1 to 1. The low flow value was determined by PADEP and referenced in the NPDES fact sheet using a proportional drainage area calculation and low flow data from the USGS Gage Station No. 01452500 Monocacy Creek)

The nearest surface water intake of record for public water supply is located approximately 44 River Miles downstream of the docket holder's discharge on the Delaware River in Plumstead Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania and is operated by Forest Park Water (North Penn and North Wales Water Authority).

The project as approved herein does not impair or conflict with the Comprehensive Plan.

The effluent limits in the NPDES Permit meet or exceed 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-1988-052-6 below, Docket No. D-1988-052-5 is terminated and replaced by Docket No. D-1988-052-6; 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 TABLES 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 (UNT Little Bushkill Creek)		
PARAMETER	LIMIT	MONITORING
pH (Standard Units)	6 to 9 at all times	As required by NPDES Permit
Total Suspended Solids	27 mg/l	As required by NPDES Permit
Dissolved Oxygen	5.0 mg/l (minimum at all times)	As required by NPDES Permit
CBOD ₅ (at 20° C)	25 mg/l	As required by NPDES Permit

OUTFALL NO. 001 (UNT Little Bushkill Creek)		
PARAMETER	LIMIT	MONITORING
CBOD ₅ (at 20° C) Influent	Monitor & Report	As required by NPDES Permit
CBOD ₅ (at 20° C)	Minimal removal of 85%	As required by NPDES Permit
Ammonia Nitrogen	3.0 mg/l	As required by NPDES Permit
Fecal Coliform	200 colonies per 100 ml as a geometric average	As required by NPDES Permit
Total Dissolved Solids	1,000 mg/l *	As required by NPDES Permit
True Color	100 Pt-Co Units	As required by NPDES Permit
Total Phosphorus (5-1 to 9/30)	Monitor and Report	As required by NPDES Permit
Total Nitrogen (5-1 to 9/30)	Monitor and Report	As required by NPDES Permit
Nitrite -Nitrate as N (5-1 to 9/30)	Monitor and Report	As required by NPDES Permit

* See DECISION Condition C.4.

Other Conditions

2. Prior to the docket holder initiating any substantial alterations or additions to the existing WWTP as defined in Section 3.10.3A2.a.16) of the Commission's *WQR*, an application must be submitted and approved by the Commission. Such an application shall be submitted prior to final design to ensure that the Commission can provide the docket holder with draft effluent limitations for SPW specific parameters as guidance for design as to not require duplication of work or cause a substantial expenditure of public funds without Commission approval. The docket holder is encouraged to contact the Commission staff during the planning stages to identify the potential effluent limitations required to meet the no measurable change parameters under SPW.

3. 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*.

4. 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.

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 the docket holder has not applied to renew the docket or the DRBC is unable 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 renewal of the docket.
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. 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. 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.
15. 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).

16. 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).

17. The docket holder shall request a name change 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).

18. 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.

19. 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: September 2, 2026

EXPIRATION DATE: December 31, 2032