

Stormwater discharge permit being updated

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An additional round of public comments is expected for proposed changes to the state industrial stormwater discharge permit after poultry industry representatives raised concerns about increased costs of compliance.

The 2011 revisions, which are being developed by the **Georgia Environmental Protection Division**, are expected to slightly expand the number of companies regulated by the permit. A final version of the updated permit, which affects industries that discharge stormwater into state waters, is expected to go into effect sometime next year.

Since 1993, the Georgia EPD has been responsible for regulating the quality of stormwater discharges by Georgia industries ranging from paper products and chemical manufacturers to textiles, transportation and automobile salvage yards. The existing permit has been in effect since 2006 and will remain in force until the newest version becomes effective.

The latest version of the standards has been moving through the update process, with multiple rounds of public comment, since June.

"We received a good number of comments from the first comment period in June, and those comments brought about mainly clarification-type changes," said Larry Hedges, program manager of the nonpoint source program of the Georgia EPD. A second period of public comment was held in September.

The EPD was preparing to issue the new

permit when people in the poultry processing industry expressed concerns to EPD staff about the cost of compliance with new requirements for industries that discharge stormwater into streams that are on the state list of impaired waters. These are streams that don't meet established water quality standards.

"We are continuing to have discussions with the poultry industry regarding possible changes to industry requirements to make it less expensive for that industry sector," Hedges said. "They are a large employer in Georgia, and one of the larger companies, **Cagle's Inc.**, recently filed Chapter 11. The EPD is sensitive to situations like that and the current economic plight of the poultry industry in Georgia."

"If it goes the way I expect it to go, the additional changes will be more than just fine-tuning, and it will require us to go back for public notice for an additional 30 days of public comment, probably right around the first of the year," Hedges said.

Once the extra public comment time and additional refinements to the draft are completed and the new permit becomes effective, companies will have 90 days to update and implement their stormwater pollution prevention plan, Hedges said.

The organization of the proposed 2011 stormwater discharge permit is patterned after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Multi-Sector General Permit that was issued in 2008. Following the EPA's permit format, the state's proposed permit divides industry into 28 sectors, up from the existing 21 sectors Georgia currently uses.

According to Hedges, the proposed permit will also bring a very small number of companies not currently requiring permit coverage — but that list stormwater discharge as a secondary activity — into the fold of being regulated for stormwater discharge.

Companies that have not previously been covered will be required to make a stormwater pollution prevention plan created either by their own staff members or with the aid of an outside environmental consulting expert, he said.

Terry Drabek, senior environmental engineer with **Sierra Piedmont Inc.**, an environmental consulting firm in Woodstock, says a company new to this process can cut costs by having one of its employees create a stormwater pollution prevention plan.

A typical plan created by an outside expert could cost \$3,500 to \$5,000, she said.

"It's pulling in those that were not previously being regulated under the permit for stormwater," Drabek said. "Over the years, stormwater regulation has covered more and more types of facilities because the permit is aimed at trying to regulate what they think are causing the stormwater pollution problems. This broadens the net to catch the pollution issues that were not being addressed."

Sierra Piedmont is contacting its clients to alert them that they will have to incorporate additional provisions of the new permit into their stormwater plan. "Yes, we know it's coming, and we're planning ahead," Drabek said.

Activities covered by the permit

Some categories of industrial facilities required to obtain NPDES permit coverage for stormwater discharges:

- Timber Products
- Steam Electric Generating Facilities
- Paper and Allied Products
- Land Transportation and Warehousing
- Chemical and Allied Products
- Manufacturing
- Asphalt Paving and Roofing Materials and Lubricant Manufacturing
- Glass, Clay, Cement, Concrete and Gypsum Products
- Air Transportation Facilities
- Treatment Works
- Transportation Equipment, Industrial or Commercial Machinery
- Food and Kindred Products
- Electronic, Electrical, Photographic and Optical Goods
- Oil and Gas Extraction
- Furniture and Fixtures
- Printing and Publishing
- Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage or Disposal Facilities
- Automobile Salvage Yards
- Scrap Recycling Facilities

Source: Environmental Protection Division
Fact Sheet