

DEP Daily Update

 E-MAIL THIS PAGE  PRINT THIS

DEP: Innovative Trading Allows Harrisburg Wastewater Plant to Meet Chesapeake Bay Limits More Cost Effectively

HARRISBURG (Dec. 4) -- Ratepayers of the Harrisburg Authority's wastewater treatment plant may save nearly \$30 million under the conditions of a new discharge permit issued today by the Department of Environmental Protection.

DEP's permit requires the authority to purchase nutrient credits in combination with facility upgrades to ensure the treatment plant complies with new Chesapeake Bay nutrient discharge limits. The limits, known as cap loads, pertain to nitrogen and phosphorus and are required to meet water quality standards that Maryland adopted in 2005.

"Combining construction and nutrient credit trading was the authority's most cost-effective solution for meeting these nutrient cap loads", said DEP South-central Regional Office Director Rachel Diamond. "We encourage municipalities and authorities to find creative solutions to reduce pollution while limiting the impact on ratepayers. For other treatment plants throughout the state's Chesapeake Bay watershed, using nutrient credit trading as opposed to relying solely on capital upgrades has helped to reduce the costs to ratepayers."

The National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit calls for the authority to begin purchasing nitrogen and phosphorous credits in 2011. The facility upgrade project that will be part of the authority's overall compliance strategy is estimated to cost \$35 million and must be completed by 2014.

By purchasing nutrient credits, the authority estimates that it will save \$28 million over the next 20 years, which will save ratepayers an estimated \$48 per year on sewer service charges.

The authority solicited bids for the nutrient credits in the state's first public bidding last fall.

Nutrient credit trading is a market-based program that provides incentives for dischargers to earn nutrient reduction credits by going beyond legal obligations to remove nutrients from a watershed. The credits can then be sold to help others more cost-effectively meet their nutrient reduction obligations or goals.

For more information, visit www.dep.state.pa.us or call 717-705-4700.