



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Environmental Conservation

DIVISION OF WATER
Wastewater Discharge Authorization Program

PO Box 111800
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1800
Main: 907.465.5180
Fax: 907.465.5070

March 16, 2023

Subject: **Early notification** of wastewater discharge permit for Small Domestic Lagoons

Dear Local and Tribal Government Leaders:

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) proposes to reissue an Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES) general permit (AKG573000) for the discharge of wastewater from domestic sewage treatment lagoons. The Domestic Wastewater Treatment Lagoons Discharging to Surface Water General Permit (Small Domestic Lagoons GP) would authorize the discharge of up to 1 million gallons per day (mgd) of secondary treated domestic wastewater from sewage lagoons to fresh or marine surface water in Alaska.

Background information

Domestic wastewater treatment lagoons consist of shallow bodies of wastewater contained in an earthen basin. The design of a lagoon system depends on a number of factors including the projected hydraulic flow of the community, the 5-day biochemical oxygen demand (BOD5) loading rate, climatic and local soil conditions, hydraulic retention time, and the desired effluent quality. Many lagoon systems are comprised of two or more cells that may be operated in series or in parallel. The biological community present in lagoons is similar to that found in an activated-sludge mechanical treatment plant; however, a lagoon system adds an algal population. Natural processes such as wind, heat, and fermentation typically provide mixing, and oxygen is supplied by natural re-aeration from the atmosphere and algal photosynthesis. The oxygen released by photosynthetic algae is used by bacteria to degrade organic matter. In aerated lagoon systems, biological treatment is enhanced with mechanical or diffused aeration. Discharge of the treated wastewater may be on a continuous or controlled basis. For those lagoons that discharge on a controlled basis, many communities will discharge once or twice a year, typically either after spring thaw or in the fall prior to freeze-up. The sun's ultraviolet radiation contributes to natural disinfection, especially during the long Alaskan summer days; however, some lagoons that discharge on a continuous basis and lack a sufficient amount of detention time to allow natural disinfection to occur may chlorinate prior to discharge.

Description of discharge

Potential pollutants in domestic wastewater discharge from sewage lagoons include 5-day biochemical oxygen demand, dissolved oxygen, enterococci bacteria, fecal coliform bacteria, escherichia coli, pH, total residual chlorine, and total suspended solids. In order to ensure the protection of water quality and human health, the permit would set conditions on the discharge, including effluent limitations, effluent monitoring requirements, and outline facility operation and maintenance procedures the operator would be required to implement. Qualified applicants may request modified effluent limitations and facility specific mixing zones for dissolved

oxygen, fecal coliform bacteria, pH, or total residual chlorine. DEC will authorize a mixing zone if it is consistent with the Clean Water Act (CWA) and the mixing zone criteria at 18 AAC 70.240 through 18 AAC 70.270. The public would be notified and have an opportunity to comment on proposed mixing zones; previously authorized mixing zones would be described and reauthorized in an appendix to the general permit. Facilities seeking to discharge a pollutant that causes or contributes to the impairment of waterbodies included on the CWA Section 303(d) list as impaired for failure to meet a water quality standard would be excluded from permit coverage by the Small Domestic Lagoon GP and required to seek an individual permit.

General Permit additional information

Any operator that meets the eligibility requirements of the general permit will be authorized to discharge after filing a Notice of Intent (NOI) with DEC so long as all conditions of the permit are met. The public has an opportunity to comment and provide information for this general permit; however, public notice will not be issued for individual NOIs submitted by qualified facilities. The general permit will expire five years after the effective date.

Opportunities for tribal and local government participation in this permitting decision

DEC recognizes rural Alaska has unique needs and considerations with regard to wastewater discharges and strives to issue permits that reflect a full understanding of local conditions. This letter is intended as an **early notice** to assist you in determining whether your community may be affected and inform you of the opportunity to provide traditional, cultural, or other local information that DEC should consider as part of this permit reissuance. DEC would like to know how your area and resources may be affected by this permitting action.

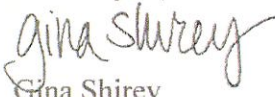
Next steps

After the permit is drafted, there will be a **10 day applicant review period** of the preliminary draft permit. Following the applicant review period, there will be a minimum of a **30 day public review and comment period**. I will provide a copy of the public notice for the permit by mail or e-mail at the start of the public comment period. After the public review and comment period, there will be a **5 day applicant review period** of the final draft permit before the permit is issued.

If requested, I can also provide notice of the preliminary draft and proposed final applicant review periods. Due to the short timeframes for those reviews, notices are sent by email or fax. Please provide an e-mail address or fax number if you would like to receive notices for the preliminary draft and proposed final applicant review periods.

If you would like more information or would like to provide DEC with information about this permit, please do not hesitate to contact me at (907) 465-5272 or at gina.shirey@alaska.gov. For technical questions about the permit, you may also directly contact the permit writer, Amber Bennett, at (907) 451-2190 or at amber.bennett@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,



Gina Shirey

Local and Tribal Government Coordinator



PUBLIC NOTICE

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
Wastewater Discharge Authorization Program
610 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709

NOTICE OF PROPOSED ISSUANCE OF AN ALASKA POLLUTANT DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM (APDES) GENERAL PERMIT TO DISCHARGE TO WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES

A Fact Sheet and associated documents are available for review. For inquiries or to request copies of documents, contact Nick Dallman at 610 University Ave., Fairbanks, AK 99709; 907-451-2142; or nicholas.dallman@alaska.gov.

Draft Permit Public Notice Period:

Start: 3/16/2023

Expiration: 4/17/2023

Permit Number: AKG375000

Permit Name: Small Suction Dredge Placer Miners General Permit

Proposed Permit Coverage:

The permit authorizes discharges of wastewater from highbankers and suction dredges with intake diameters less than or equal to six inches and pump engine horsepowers less than or equal to 18 hp in fresh waters and 23 hp in marine waters. The permit provides statewide coverage for discharges to waters of the U.S., with certain limitations.

Tentative Determination:

DEC has tentatively determined to reissue a discharge permit for the activity described above.

Public Comments:

Written comments or requests for a public hearing on the APDES draft permit must be submitted within 30 days of the issuance of this public notice. Any person desiring to comment on the permit may submit comments electronically (preferred) at <https://dec.alaska.gov/commish/public-notices/>.

Alternatively, you may direct written comments and requests to the attention of the DEC contact/permit writer at the email address or postal address identified above.

All comments should include the name, address, telephone number, and email address of the commenter and a concise statement of comment on the permit condition(s) and the relevant facts upon which the comment is based. Comments of either support or concern that are directed at specific, cited permit requirements are appreciated. Mailed comments and requests must be postmarked on or before the expiration date of the public notice.

DEC will consider all comments when making the final decision and will respond to received comments in a Response to Comments document issued when DEC issues a final permit. The Response to Comments will be made available to the public.

Any interested person may submit a written request for a public hearing if no hearing has already been scheduled. A request for a public hearing shall state the nature of the issues to be raised, as well as the requester's name, address, telephone number, and email address. DEC will hold a public hearing whenever DEC finds, on the basis of requests, a significant degree of public interest in a draft permit. DEC may also hold a public hearing if a hearing might clarify one or more issues involved in a permit decision or for other good reason in DEC's discretion.

DEC will transmit the final permit, fact sheet (amended as appropriate), and Response to Comments to anyone who provided comments during the public review period or requested to be notified of DEC final decision.

**DEADLINE FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS OR REQUEST FOR PUBLIC HEARING:
4/17/2023 at 11:59 p.m.**

Administrative Record:

The APDES draft permit, fact sheet, permit application, and associated documents are available for public review at the DEC offices located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Soldotna, and Wasilla. Please contact the office of your choice to arrange for hard copies of the documents to be available for your review.

555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-269-6285

610 University Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99709
907-451-2100

PO Box 1800
Juneau, AK 99811-1800
Location: 410 Willoughby Street, Suite 303, **Juneau**, AK
907-465-5300

43335 Kalifornsky Beach Road
Soldotna, AK 99615
907-262-5210

1700 E Bogard Road #B, Suite #103
Wasilla, AK 99654
907-376-1850

The documents are also accessible from the DEC website at <http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wastewater/>.

To receive email notifications about the APDES Program, including when permits are available to review, subscribe to the APDES email list at <http://list.state.ak.us/mailman/listinfo/DEC-APDES/>.

Disability Reasonable Accommodation Notice:

The State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you are a person with a disability who may need a special accommodation in order to participate in this public process, please contact Meg Kohler at 907-269-4198 or TDD Relay Service 1-800-770-8973/TTY or dial 711 within 30 days of publication of this notice to ensure that any necessary accommodations can be provided.