



WWTF Workgroup Meeting Minutes

January 6, 2011 9:30 AM

Workgroup Members Present: Kim Laird (TCEQ), Chip Morris (TCEQ by phone), Dennis Stark (City of Galveston), Raul Silvas (City of Galveston) and Lisa Miller-Marshall (GBF)

Discussion: The meeting began by introducing Henry (Chip) Morris, TCEQ to the group. He will be taking Amanda Ross's place as the project manager. We also had two new members from the City of Galveston, Raul Silvas and Dennis Stark, who introduced themselves.

The group discussed the results of the survey that went to all of the permittees in this project. Eight responses have been received so far. TCEQ will call the permittees again to encourage those that have not responded to do so. Raul said he responded for one of the facilities but will respond for several others that he is responsible for if someone can email him the survey again. Kim will email Raul the survey.

Sanitary Sewer Overflows – Some of the WWTF Workgroup members believe that this workgroup should address the sanitary sewer overflow issue. This issue has not been addressed in any of the other workgroups but is a likely source of pollution in the bays. The main focus of this meeting is to discuss sanitary sewer overflows.

Raul Silvas and Dennis Stark mentioned that since the City of Galveston began routine flush-outs of the sanitary sewer systems, their overflow problem has decreased significantly. The suggestion was made to set up an operations and management plan in those areas where there is consistently a problem with overflows. Better record keeping would help also. The suggestion was made to be better about documenting any problems, following up on problems and keeping track of routine flushings. Included in the operations and maintenance plan would be the lift stations.

The question was asked of Raul of how many times the system is repaired before it is replaced. Raul will research this question and let the group know.

Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOGs) – One cause of the sanitary sewer overflows is the dumping of fats, oils and grease down drains that clogs the system. The workgroup initially did not want to address this problem in the Oyster Waters I-Plan but discussion at this meeting indicates the subject should be revisited at the next meeting.

Raul suggested that restaurants should be required to have an appropriately sized grease trap in order to get a permit to open. Many restaurants are able to open without having a trap which means that all of the FOGs go into the sanitary system.

The topic of sanitary sewer overflows and FOGs will be further discussed at the next meeting.

The EnviroMentors Program helps those facilities that have violations get back into compliance. The workgroup recommends sending the officers of the operators association a letter describing the EnviroMentors Program to encourage use of the program. The letter should highlight that the program is not affiliated with compliance at all.

The group also recommends finding a facility that would talk to the operators at one of their meetings and relay how the program helped them and how well it works overall. Kim will email small business at TCEQ to research a possible facility that had success with the EnviroMentors program that could present their experience. Raul will email the contacts for the associations for Chambers and Harris Counties.

In addition to the letter to the association promoting the EnvironMentors program, a letter should be sent to the officers that encourages permittees to begin sampling for bacteria before their permit renewal. The letter should explain that sampling early to determine if any problems exist with either the system or the sampling technique is advisable but not required. Samples taken during this period are not reportable so that it is in their best interest to start early. This letter should also be sent to the superintendent or person that signs the reports. The letter should be sent 18 months before the permit must be renewed and again at six months before. GBF will develop this letter and send to the permittees. GBF or TCEQ will also present this information at the operators' meeting in May.

Action Items:

1. Raul will respond to the survey for several other facilities, check on how much maintenance of a system is performed before it is replaced, and send Lisa the contacts to the Chambers and Harris County Associations.
2. Kim will email Raul the link to take the survey and check with small business for an EnviroMentors success story.
3. GBF will prepare a letter that explains the importance of facilities learning how to sample for bacteria before their permit renewal is due.

Next meeting: February 3, 2011 at 9:30 am