

# MPCA issuing new general permit for Pond Wastewater Treatment Facilities

## What does this permit mean for my pond facility?

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is issuing a new general permit for Pond Wastewater Treatment Facilities (WWTFs). The MPCA has been working on the pond general permit since 2013. The holdup has been new water quality standards. When the state of Minnesota adopted River Eutrophication Standards, it required the MPCA to review all phosphorus effluent limits on a watershed basis. With hundreds of facilities across many watersheds, these reviews require a great deal of time and resources.



Currently, a number of watershed and effluent limits reviews for pond WWTFs are complete, while many are still pending.

If the MPCA waited until completing all the watershed reviews, issuance of the pond general permit would continue to be delayed for a long time. As a result, the MPCA recently developed a permitting strategy to issue the pond general permit in an effort to:

- Implement new permitting requirements to help achieve Minnesota's water quality goals
- Renew permit coverage for pond WWTFs as soon as possible
- Decrease the backlog of expired permits

Under this permitting strategy the MPCA will issue the pond general permit with a different permit number and name: Wastewater Pond General Permit (MNG585000). Note the new permit number has another "5" in it. This will allow the MPCA to issue Notices of Coverage under the new Wastewater Pond General Permit (MNG585000) to facilities with completed reviews.

Here's what your pond facility needs to know:

- MPCA is issuing a new general pond permit – Wastewater Pond General Permit (MNG585000).
- This new permit will allow the MPCA to issue Notices of Coverage to eligible WWTFs as their reviews are completed.
- This means Notices of Coverage will be issued in batches over a period of time, with separate public notices held for each subsequent batch. There are 88 pond WWTFs in the first batch that will receive coverage under the new permit. This batch process with multiple public notice periods will provide better opportunity for public review and comment.
- Pond facilities will remain covered under the expired Stabilization Pond General Permit (MNG580000) until the MPCA issues a new Notice of Coverage under the Wastewater Pond General Permit (MNG585000) or issues an individual permit.
- The MPCA will contact permit holders about any new effluent limits prior to inclusion in a batch for public notice. Note: If you do not hear from the MPCA about new limits, this means your current limits are protective of water quality and will stay the same.
- Once all pond WWTFs have received Notices of Coverage under the new Wastewater Pond General Permit (MNG585000) or received individual permits, the MPCA will terminate the expired Stabilization Pond General Permit (MNG580000).

- Please keep an eye out for MPCA communications via emails, letters, telephone calls and newsletters.
- It is important that the MPCA has your correct contact information. If you think your email address or mailing address may be out of date, please send the facility name, permit number, and new contact information to: [npdes.pca@state.mn.us](mailto:npdes.pca@state.mn.us).
- If you have any questions, please contact the MPCA:
  - By email at [generalpondpermit.pca@state.mn.us](mailto:generalpondpermit.pca@state.mn.us)
  - Or by phone:
    - Duluth, Detroit Lakes and Rochester regions  
Stephanie Lyons  
218-302-6643
    - Brainerd, Marshall and Metro regions  
Shauna Bendt  
651-757-2282

## Frequently asked questions

### Q. Our permit is expired. Does issuing the new general permit put us in violation?

A. No. Your facility will still be covered under the expired general permit until your review is complete and the MPCA issues you either a Notice of Coverage for the new general permit or an individual permit for your facility.

### Q. Does this mean we're getting a new phosphorus or other effluent limit?

A. It means you **may** receive a new limit. Your facility will only receive a new effluent limit if the MPCA finds that a new limit is needed to protect downstream water quality. You will know if you have a new phosphorus or other effluent limit once the MPCA completes your facility's limits review.

### Q. If assigned a new phosphorous or other effluent limit does it mean that I will need to upgrade?

A. Not necessarily. In general, about 50% of facilities with completed reviews are receiving new phosphorus limits. Of those facilities, about 70% can meet the new limits and 30% require the installation or implementation of phosphorus removal strategies. The MPCA will continue to work with all pond facilities on ways to meet any new effluent limits and protect Minnesota's waters.

### Q. How will I know if I have a new limit?

A. The MPCA will contact you by letter and email. The MPCA encourages you to email [generalpondpermit.pca@state.mn.us](mailto:generalpondpermit.pca@state.mn.us) or call Stephanie Lyons or Shauna Bendt at the MPCA with any questions (their phone numbers are listed above and below). You may also request a meeting with MPCA staff involved in the process.

### Q. How will I know when I will receive a Notice of Coverage under the new general permit?

A. You will be contacted by letter or email when your facility is included in a batch that will be placed on public notice and issued a Notice of Coverage. The MPCA encourages you to email [generalpondpermit.pca@state.mn.us](mailto:generalpondpermit.pca@state.mn.us) or call Stephanie Lyons or Shauna Bendt at the MPCA with any questions (their phone numbers are listed above and below). You may also request a meeting with MPCA staff involved in the process.

### Q. Where is the MPCA at in completing watershed phosphorus reviews and when do you expect to be done?

A. Minnesota has 78 major watersheds (drainage areas) with wastewater facilities that require a federal permit for their discharges. The MPCA has completed reviews for 35 watersheds with 43 more to go. The MPCA worked on the most complex watershed reviews first, so remaining areas should be completed more quickly. The MPCA is on track to finish about 15 watersheds per year, so the remainder of reviews should be done within 3 years. The MPCA uses reviews to justify both why limits are or are not needed. So even in areas where new phosphorus limits are not needed, the watershed review may be necessary to provide a legally defensible permit.