

## **Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative (SBCI) Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) Workgroup**

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### **Call To Order:**

The workgroup was called to order at 1:30 p.m.

### **Those present were:**

Laura Ogar, Bay County Environmental Affairs & Community Development; Thomas McDowell, DEQ; Robert Hill, Environmental Health; Mike Kelly, TCF/WIN; Pete Ostlund, MDEQ; Jon Bloemker, MDEQ; Terry Walkington, DEQ/WHMD; Bill Washabaugh, Shoreline Resident; Jeanette Best, Saginaw WWTP; Philip Adair, City of Bay City; Don Scherzer, Spicer Group; and Cyndi Gaul, Bay County Environmental Affairs & Community Development.

The DEQ provided a handout: "Report of Discharges of Untreated or Partially Treated Sewage."

Brief introductions were made.

Laura Ogar commented that the SBCI CSO Workgroup meeting notice had been placed in the Bay City Times by Jeff Kart.

Laura Ogar gave an overview of the SBCI Meeting that took place on June 5<sup>th</sup> at the Community Center. She received some good feedback about the meeting. Overall, the SBCI Meeting was a success.

Laura Ogar discussed the copy of the CSO Discharge notification she received from Health Department and the report from the WWTP titled "Report of Discharges of Untreated or Partially Treated Sewage." She said that the forms were misleading at upon first reading the reports seem to indicate that possible untreated sewage had been discharged in to the Saginaw River. However, it took careful reading to decipher that the sewage had been treated yet was still listed as a "CSOs" when DEQ staff have explained that these discharges are actually from treated retention basins, with an effluent quality similar to normal wastewater discharges. Laura Ogar felt that the way the forms were set up appeared to be a contradiction to what was actually taking place and could easily see why the public and the media would see these reports as untreated sewage discharge.

Jeannette Best explained that when a CSO takes place, the WWTP reports are sent to the DEQ, local health department, and the local newspaper located downstream from a discharge.

Jeannette Best further explained that this notification takes place at the time the event happens.

At the conclusion of an event, the same group is notified via e-mail or telephone. Once the discharge has ended, the WWTP must submit the standardized report showing the results of the water sampling. Laura questioned the language used on the report that states "partially treated sewage". Jeannette explained that was DEQ language, and that the phrase "partially treated sewage" wasn't truly reflective of discharge events. The actual DEQ report form does not list a choice for "treated from a Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP)". Jeannette would like to see this choice added to the form to better reflect what's happening during these discharge events. Pete Ostlund agreed and said that the DEQ would change the forms to add this choice. There was also discussion about how the term "Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO)" is not truly reflective of the discharges taking place from the Waste Water Treatment Plants (WWTP) Retention Treatment Basins (RTB's).

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Jeannette said that the location of the DEQ report form on their website was misleading. Currently, the report form for the DEQ is found on the website under the heading of Separate Sewage Overflow (SSO). Jeannette sees this as a concern because it incorrectly describes what the reporting is about and creates further negativity surrounding discharge events. CSOs that are reported in our area are really discharges from Retention Treatment Basins. Discussion ensued.

Laura suggested that the workgroup replace their use of the term "CSO" with the verbiage "discharge from a Retention Treatment Basin". This change in language should more accurately describe what is actually happening during discharge events and help to get the message out that raw sewage is not being discharged into the water from the WWTPs. Terry Watson explained that at the time the forms were developed, there were so many different types of discharges that they were too complicated for the law, so they were all lumped together under the heading CSO. Pete Ostlund would like to see sampling after a discharge event to better see the impact of such events on our water. Bob Hill would like to see sampling done at the point of discharge, and Laura agreed. Discussion ensued.

The group agreed that discharges formally known as CSOs are from this point forward to be referred to as RTBs. Pete Ostlund suggested that this verbiage be placed at the top of DEQ forms. Everyone felt that this shift in verbiage would help clarify what's really taking place during a discharge event.

Philip Adair explained that prior to 1955, all discharges went into the bay without any treatment whatsoever. Between 1955 And 1970 several Waste Water Treatment Plants were built as a primary treatment source via retention basins and chlorine treatment. At the time, it was cheaper to build retention basins then to create a separate sewage system. It was estimated that 90% of the water left in each basin was discharged into the Bay. Phillip went on to explain that the City of Bay City has a holding time in retention basins that is 4-times beyond the holding requirements. Discussion ensued.

Laura Ogar again questioned why such discharge events were called CSOs. The title of the reporting seems very misleading. Pete Ostlund thinks the title of the report can be changed (as it is a DEQ form) to reflect the RTB discharges. Jeannette Best thought this would be a good idea since the RTBs are chlorinated and treated much the same as water discharged from a WWTP. People need to understand that the water being discharged from WWTP and RTBs is treated. Any of the initial discharge event contact information should not make reference to CSOs because this is misleading information. Even the workgroup is guilty of using incorrect verbiage as we continue to call the events CSOs. Therefore, it's important for members of the group to change their verbiage to better reflect what is really going on in order to prevent confusion at the notification level with the media and other agencies.

Laura Ogar would like to see some of the older reports of events provided as additional information at the Public Meeting. It would be great to show where we've been and where we are now using such reports as comparison. Jeannette Best said she would be making a presentation to the City Council regarding the difference between CSOs and RTBs. Laura thought that might be a good presentation for Jeannette to make at the Public Meeting. Terry Walkington wondered if Saginaw would like to be involved with the workgroup. Laura explained that she has made outreach to Saginaw County and received no response. However, Laura

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stated that if anyone knew of people that would be interested in being a part of the workgroup they should let them know the meeting dates and times. Bob Hill mentioned that Bryant Wilke would be a good contact for the Saginaw County Health Department. Pete Ostlund believes that changing the language in the reports and on the reporting forms is a good way to start changing public perception and further educate.

Laura Ogar said that the CSO presentation made at the June 5<sup>th</sup> SBCI Meeting was well done and that she received some good feed-back. Laura did think that some of the information might have been too technical, while still valuable and good we may need to bring it down to a more digestible level. Laura felt it was important to show the association between RTB water sample results and the other pollutants in an area such as phosphorus, wildlife, and livestock. It's important for the public to realize that this is a complex problem that won't be solved with simply ending RTB discharges. There are more factors affecting water quality. Pete Ostland stated that water quality standards have increased over the years and such improvement in the standards reflects a movement forward, though this is a very complex issue involving other factors. Laura agreed that this is a very complex issue and part of the workgroup's goal is to better inform the public so they understand all the factors affecting our water quality.

Laura would like a variety of groups to take part in the Public Meeting to show the unity of the various agencies working toward better water quality. Laura would like to see some sort of cost analysis at the Public Meeting, along with some information on other contributing factors to water quality and a presentation of the differences between CSOs and RTBs. She would also like to see presentations from the DEQ, the City of Bay City, Saginaw County and local health departments.

Laura Ogar said that ultimately there needs to be a discussion on public costs to determine what people are willing to pay toward eliminating the RTBs. People will want to know the cost factor and that information should be provided at the Public Meeting. Pete Ostlund said that any state funding at this point is really unknown. Project plans are due to the State for Stimulus Funds on July 1<sup>st</sup> and once that date passes we will have a better handle on what funding will be provided for the next year. Bill Washabaugh doesn't think that the workgroup should lead people to believe that stimulus money will solve any of the water quality issues, or that there will be access to such funds.

Furthermore, Bill thinks that it's very important for the workgroup to understand that for some people in our community any amount of discharge is too much discharge. Pete Ostlund acknowledged that for some people any discharge is considered too much, even if it's not the largest contributor of all the water quality factors. However, Pete thought it was important to explain the percentages of non-source pollutants to our waterways at the Public Meeting in order for the public to determine if they want money spend eliminating CSOs/RTBs or if they feel funds would be better spent in some other area of water quality management. Laura Ogar reiterated that this is a very complex issue and people feel very passionate about our water quality. She further acknowledged that there was no easy solution to the problem since there are so many complex issues to deal with. This is one of the reasons she wants the group to use RTB terminology rather than CSOs to describe the discharges in an effort to start to change the way people think of such events.

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### **Workgroup Task List:**

1. The Revision of DEQ Forms to reflect RTBs. (Pete Ostlund)
2. Use of RTB term to describe discharges more accurately. (All)
3. Work with WWTP operators to see a timeline, historical information and past costs. (Jeanette Best, Saginaw WWTP and Philip Adair, City of Bay City)
4. Work on Presentations for Public Meeting to be held in October (All)
5. Produce a Cost Analysis of what it would take to eliminate CSOs/RTBs. (DEQ)
6. Contact NOA to provide a presentation on MUCK findings. (Laura Ogar)
7. Provide a list of organizations that can present at the Public Meeting in October, along with their contact person(s) and information. Some organizations mentioned during the meeting included: NOA, NTBS Program, SVSU, Civil Division Heads at universities, WIF, and MWEA. (All)

Everyone should be prepared to report on their respective task (listed above) to the next SBCI CSO Workgroup Meeting.

### **Adjournment:**

The June 25, 2009 meeting of the SBCI CSO Workgroup was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

### **Next Meeting:**

SBCI CSO Workgroup Meetings take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month. The next meeting is Thursday, July 23, 2009 at 1:30 p.m. in the MDEQ Office located at 401 Ketchum Street, Bay City, Michigan 48708.

*Transcribed by C. Gaul*