(9/23/14) Board Meeting
Draft Drinking Water Systems General Permit
Deadline: 8/19/14 by 12:00 noon

#51

RECEIVED
8-19-14
SWRCB Clerk

Stanford University
Sustainability and Energy Management
Utilities Division
327 Bonair Siding, 2nd Floor
Stanford, CA 94305-7272

August 18, 2014

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL
commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov

Subject: Comments on the Draft Statewide NPDES Permit for Drinking Water System Discharges to Surface Waters

Dear Ms. Townsend,

Stanford University Utilities Services (Stanford Utilities) has been following the development of draft drinking water system NPDES permits with the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 2) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). Stanford Utilities provides domestic water to the University's academic campus as well as student housing and faculty and staff homes on campus. Stanford Utilities purchases domestic water from San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) and serves a daily average population of 29,400. We have 1,466 service connections and use an average of 2.1 million gallons per day.

Stanford Utilities appreciates the collaborative approach with stake holders taken by both Region 2 and the SWRCB. With so many community water systems across the state, there are differing operations as well as potable water quality that should be considered by the SWRCB as a part of the development of the Statewide NPDES Permit for Drinking Water System Discharges to Surface Waters dated July 3, 2014 (Draft Permit). Stanford Utilities appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Permit.

Stanford Utilities has reviewed the SWRCB's Draft Permit and respectfully requests consideration of the comments below to be addressed in the draft permit language prior to adoption.

51.1 **POST-NOTIFICATION OF EMERGENCY DISCHARGES OR NON-COMPLIANT DISCHARGES THAT HAVE ADVERSE EFFECT OR IMPACTS ON BENEFICIAL USES OF RECEIVING WATER**

Section V of Attachment E currently states "*Within 24 hours of the Discharge[r] becoming aware of adverse effects or impact on beneficial uses of a receiving water body due to non-compliance of this Order, or within 24 hours of the Discharger becoming aware of a system failure or emergency involving a discharge from its drinking water system that may adversely [affect] or impact beneficial uses of a receiving water body, the Discharger shall notify the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), and shall confirm this notification in writing to the corresponding Regional Water Board within five days.*" It is Stanford Utilities' opinion that the conditions stated in the language above that would require notification to CalOES are too general and would ultimately lead to calls to CalOES following all unplanned discharges that were not able to be controlled using

best management practices (BMPs) and reached the receiving water body. This could lead to an unnecessary increase in the amount of reporting required by each water agency as well as impacting resources within CalOES by a large increase in workload. Stanford Utilities proposes modification of the above stated language to clearly state what volumes, levels of chlorine, or observations of a receiving water would indicate that a discharge "*may adversely affect or impact beneficial uses of a receiving water body*".

Section VII of Attachment E states "*Dischargers shall report catastrophic discharges to the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) within 24 hours of the discovery of the discharge or as soon as feasible after measures to protect public health and safety have been implemented. For the purposes of this reporting, catastrophic discharges include, but are not limited to, release of super-chlorinated water that is not properly de-chlorinated, high volume discharges that cause erosion and discharge sediment, salts and minerals in receiving waters, discharges that threaten public safety (e.g., washout of a hillside), and discharges potentially harming aquatic life.*" As stated above, this draft language is still vague and would result in excessive calls to CalOES and a burden both the water systems and CalOES staff. Please consider identifying minimum discharge volume thresholds for both super-chlorinated and potable water that could be used to determine if reporting is warranted and remove language such as "*discharges potentially harming aquatic life*".

MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM

PH

51.2 Attachment C, Section I.C. states "*All discharges from distribution system draining for cleaning and maintenance shall be dechlorinated, pH adjusted as appropriate, and filtered to remove sediment, prior to discharging to surface waters or storm drains.*" Section VII of the Draft Permit Order further states: "*The pH level to be lowered below the pH receiving water objective in a corresponding Regional Water Board basin plan.*" These Requirements should be fully stated in each section to avoid confusion and it should be made clear in Attachment C that there are no specific pH limits for the discharge itself.

The statement in Section VII of the Draft Permit Order (quoted above) only references discharges lowering the pH of receiving waters. Stanford Utilities typically has domestic water with a pH above that of the basin plan limits for the receiving water. The Fact Sheet included as Attachment F to the Draft Permit states that it is unnecessary to include effluent limitation for pH. Stanford Utilities agrees with this statement, but would like to clarify that water systems can maintain a pH of varying ranges as long as it is protective of human health, water quality, and corrosion. Water that Stanford Utilities purchases from SFPUC is typically delivered at a pH between 9.4 and 9.6. Adjusting the pH of water purchased from SFPUC prior to a discharge would prove to be unreasonably complex, costly, and result in high risk to the environment. In order to lower the pH to within basin plan limits (below a pH of 8.5), the risk of potentially overfeeding acid and/or a spill of the chemicals to the environment would be introduced. Stanford Utilities believes that the routine discharges from its system are not at risk of altering the receiving water pH outside of basin plan ranges, however, the current permit wording could result in the need to monitor receiving waters. It is Stanford Utilities' opinion that pH monitoring should be eliminated from required discharge monitoring by the permit and the data be requested in the annual report using monitoring already conducted routinely in the transmission (e.g. SFPUC) and distribution (e.g. Stanford) systems.

NUMERIC EFFLUENT LIMITS

51.3 Beyond the comments above, Stanford Utilities suggests that the numeric effluent limits (NEL) for chlorine residual and turbidity proposed in this permit be eliminated and replaced by action

levels. Given Stanford Utilities' experience with the Construction General Permit for stormwater discharges, action levels have been an effective means to evaluating BMPs and taking action to improve discharge water quality. In addition, potable water system discharges have already been defined by the State Water Board as "de minimis" and "not likely to cause or have a reasonable potential to cause or contribute to an adverse impact on the beneficial uses of receiving waters."[1] The inclusion of numeric effluent limits is inconsistent with this definition.

Stanford Utilities appreciates the significant effort that SWRCB staff has invested in this permit writing process, none the less we strongly recommend that additional attention must be paid to the issues listed above. Stanford Utilities requests SWRCB staff to continue to outreach to water systems, as more input is needed in the development of a general permit that will have significant impacts on all water systems subject to this permit. We also ask that a second Draft Permit be available for comments on changes made based on the comments from this period prior to final permit adoption. We are looking forward to continuing the improvement of the general permit as we work together with SWRCB and other stakeholder groups.

51.4

Feel free to contact me at (650) 723-9747 if you have questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Julia Nussbaum, PE
Senior Environmental Engineer
Utilities Department
Stanford University

cc: Marty Laporte (electronic copy), Stanford Utilities Services
Richard Souza (electronic copy), Stanford Water Shop
Tom Zigterman (electronic copy), Stanford Utilities Services

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[1] This definition is codified in the California Code of Regulations (CCR Title 23 Division 3 Chapter 9 Article 1 Section 2200 Subdivision (b) (9) Category 3 footnote 18).

18 De minimis discharge activities include, but are not limited to, the following: ... discharges from fire hydrant testing or flushing; discharges resulting from construction dewatering; discharges associated with supply well installation, development, test pumping, and purging; discharges resulting from the maintenance of uncontaminated water supply wells, pipelines, tanks, etc.; discharges resulting from hydrostatic testing of water supply vessels, pipelines, tanks, etc.; discharges resulting from the disinfection of water supply pipelines, tanks, reservoirs, etc.; discharges from water supply systems resulting from system failures, pressure releases, etc.; and other similar types of wastes that have low pollutant concentrations and are not likely to cause or have a reasonable potential to cause or contribute to an adverse impact on the beneficial uses of receiving waters yet technically must be regulated under an NPDES permit. (emphasis added)