



RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

**City of Rexburg
Permit Number ID-002381-7**

A draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the City of Rexburg Wastewater Treatment Plant was issued for Public Notice on April 27, 2001. This comment period was originally scheduled to close May 29, 2001 but was extended 15 days (to expire June 13, 2001) in response to a request from the permittee. Public notice of this extension was mailed to interested parties and published on May 28, 2001 in the local Rexburg newspaper (The Standard Journal).

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) received written comments from the permittee dated May 21, 2001 and June 8, 2001. This Response To Comments document is a summary of the significant comments related to the draft NPDES permit and the EPA's responses. The Section of the permit the comment refers to is identified in parentheses at the end of the comment. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) issued a final 401 certification dated July 23, 2001. The certification conditions are summarized at the end of the document.

1. **Comment.** Is the City ever required to discharge to the Rexburg Canal? For example, when the flow in the Teton River is low. (Section I.A.1)

Response. The NPDES permit allows the City the option of discharging either to the Teton River (through outfall 001) or the Rexburg Canal (through outfall 002). The permit does not require the City to reroute its discharge from the Teton River to the Rexburg Canal under any particular condition. When the flow in the Teton River is low (i.e., less than 81 cubic feet per second), more stringent effluent conditions apply in order to assure compliance with the state's water quality standards.

2. **Comment.** When is monitoring required at outfalls 001 and 002? If the City discharges continuously to the Teton River through outfall 001, is effluent monitoring required at outfall 002?(Section I.A.1)

Response. Effluent monitoring is only required at the outfall where the facility is currently discharging. If the City elects to discharge continuously through outfall 001 to the Teton River, then the parameters in Table I.A.1 as well as the whole effluent toxicity monitoring shall be from outfall 001.

3. **Comment.** It appears that even when outfall 002 is not being used, ambient monitoring is still required in the Rexburg Canal. The City requests that the flow monitoring in the Canal only be required when outfall 002 is being utilized? (Section I.C)

Response. The City's statement is correct that irregardless of the discharge location, the ambient (in-stream) monitoring must be conducted in the Teton River as well as in the Rexburg Canal. Year-round flow monitoring in the Rexburg Canal is useful to determine if/when a mixing zone (i.e., zone of dilution) is available in the Canal upon permit reissuance. This flow information is not currently available and could result in less stringent effluent limitations for the City while still attaining Idaho's water quality standards. The draft conditions have been retained in the final permit.

4. **Comment.** Weekly effluent monitoring of lead, silver and zinc is very expensive. The city requests that the frequency be changed from weekly to monthly. (Section I.A.1)

Response. The City's request for monthly monitoring of lead, silver and zinc has been incorporated in the final permit. The monthly monitoring frequency is consistent with the requirements in other recently issued NPDES permits.

5. **Comment.** Outfall 001 is one (1) mile below the USGS monitoring station 13055340. Can this data be used to fulfill the requirement for ambient flow monitoring above outfall 001? (Section I.C)

Response. Yes. Table 2 - Surface Water Monitoring Parameter, Locations, and Method Detection Limits, found in Section I.C of the permit contains footnote 2 which states "When discharging through outfall 001, the average monthly flow can be reported from USGS station 13055340 for compliance determinations. If USGS monitoring is discontinued at this site, it shall be continued by the permittee."

6. **Comment.** Is the city required to install a weir and a continuous flow recording monitoring station upstream of outfall 001 in the Teton River and upstream of outfall 002 in the Rexburg Canal or can flows be determined on a weekly basis? (Section I.A and Section I.C)

Response. Table 1 in Section I.A and Table 2 in Section I.C of the draft and final permit only require weekly monitoring of the flow in the Teton River and Rexburg Canal. A continuous monitoring station is not necessary. The sampling type has been changed from "recording" to "calculated" to correct any confusion. As stated in Response #5, the average monthly flows from USGS station 13055340 can be used for the purpose of determining the flow upstream of outfall 001.

7. **Comment.** The Rexburg Canal does not discharge into the Teton River. It enters the Henry's Fork of the Snake River 4-5 miles downstream of outfall 002 in a remote wetlands location on private land. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to access this

location to conduct ambient monitoring. In addition, both the Teton River and Henry's Fork of the Snake River are frozen over in the winter. The City requests that the permit be changed to require surface monitoring during non-frozen periods in the Teton River. The Rexburg Canal only contains flow from the middle of April to the middle of October. Ambient monitoring shouldn't be required when there is no flow. (Section I.C)

Response. The requirement to monitor for total ammonia, temperature, pH and hardness downstream of outfall 002 where it mixes with the Teton River (now known to be the Henry's Fork) has been eliminated from Section I.C of the permit. In addition, Section I.C has been changed to read "Surface water monitoring is required beginning four (4) months from the effective date of the permit when not frozen over and containing flow." The permittee must indicate in the "Comments" section of the discharge monitoring report (DMR) when the Rexburg Canal does not contain flow.

8. **Comment.** The City requests that the current permit's minimum range of 6.5 standard units (s.u.) for pH be retained. The new lower range of 6.0 s.u. is too close to a neutral condition. (Section I.A.4)

Response. Idaho's water quality standard (IDAPA 58.01.02.250.01.a) requires that hydrogen ion concentration (pH) values be within the range of 6.5 to 9.5 s.u. Although the technology-based limits found in federal regulation 40 CFR 133.102 only require pH to be within the range of 6.0 and 9.0 standard units, NPDES permits are required to contain the more stringent of technology and water quality-based conditions. Therefore, the lower pH range of 6.5 s.u. and upper range of 8.0 s.u. has been retained in the final permit.

9. **Comment.** Is the annual chronic whole effluent toxicity (WET) test required for both outfalls 001 and 002 or just one outfall? (Section I.B)

Response. The permittee is only required to conduct chronic WET tests on one of the two outfalls. The effluent used for the test should be representative of the City's current operating condition. The language in Section I.C of the final permit has been changed to read "The permittee must conduct chronic toxicity tests on effluent samples from either outfall 001 or 002, whichever outfall represents the current operating condition." in order to clarify the intent of the monitoring location.

10. **Comment.** The City requests that an example of a quality assurance plan (QAP) be provided (Section I.D)

Response. Quality assurance plans should be developed specific to the facility's needs and permit requirements. Therefore, an example QAP has not been provided. The City should refer to the following documents when developing its QAP: *Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans* (EPA/QA/R-5) and *Guidance for Quality Assurance Project Plans* (EPA/QA/G-5). These documents can be found on EPA's website at www.epa.gov/Region10/offices/oea/qaindex.htm.

Conditions provided by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality in the 401 Certification

1. **Compliance schedules.** The City of Rexburg should be given five years to comply with the new effluent limits on ammonia and zinc. The City should report biannually to IDEQ on the actions being implemented and any possible resolutions to meet the final effluent limits.

Changes to permit. Section I.A.6 has been added to the final permit that allows the City five years to come into compliance with its effluent limits. The City must submit Progress Reports to EPA and IDEQ by January 31st and July 31st that outline the progress made towards compliance with the final effluent limitations.

2. **Mixing zone.** Idaho Department of Environmental Quality certifies the use of two flow tiers and the 25% by volume mixing zone for the second tier.

Changes to permit. No changes are necessary.

3. **Ambient Monitoring Location Plan.** The City must provide IDEQ a Proposed Ambient Monitoring Location Plan for the sampling points for review and approval. This plan shall be submitted 60 days prior to sampling.

Changes to permit. Section I.C.1 has been expanded to read “Monitoring stations must be submitted to IDEQ for review and approval within two months of the effective date of the permit.”