

**NPDES PERMIT NO. NM0028835  
RESPONSE TO COMMENTS**

RECEIVED ON THE SUBJECT DRAFT NATIONAL POLLUTANT DISCHARGE  
ELIMINATION SYSTEM (NPDES) PERMIT IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATIONS  
LISTED AT 40 CFR 124.17

APPLICANT: City of Socorro  
P.O. Box K  
Socorro, NM 87801

ISSUING OFFICE: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Region 6  
1201 Elm Street, Suite 500  
Dallas, TX 75270

PREPARED BY: Jim Afghani  
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PERMIT ACTION: Final permit decision and response to comments received on the proposed  
NPDES permit publicly noticed on April 24, 2021.

DATE PREPARED: June 14, 2021

Unless otherwise stated, citations to 40 CFR refer to promulgated regulations  
listed at Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, revised as of June 14, 2021.

**SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES FROM DRAFT PERMIT:**

- Monitoring frequency for recoverable aluminum, dissolved aluminum, and dissolved copper changed to once per month.

**STATE CERTIFICATION**

In a letter from Shelly Lemon, Bureau Chief, SWQB, to Charles Maguire, Director, Water Division (EPA) dated June 8, 2021, the NMED certified that the discharge will comply with the applicable provisions of Section 208(e), 301, 302, 303, 306 and 307 of the Clean Water Act and with appropriate requirements of State law upon inclusion of the conditions of certification in the permit.

The NMED stated that in order to meet the requirements of State law, including water quality standards and appropriate basin plans as may be amended by the water quality management plan, each of the conditions cited in the draft permit and the State certification shall not be made less stringent.

The State also stated that it reserves the right to amend or revoke this certification if such action is necessary to ensure compliance with the State's water quality standards and water quality management plan.

**COMMENTS THAT ARE CONDITIONS OF CERTIFICATION:**

None

**COMMENTS THAT ARE NOT CONDITIONS OF CERTIFICATION:**

**NMED Comment No. 1:** The proposed monitoring for copper and aluminum is based on the reasonable potential analysis. The proposed permit includes a sampling frequency of three samples per week for total recoverable aluminum, dissolved aluminum, and dissolved copper. NMED supports a sampling frequency of once per week or once per month for these parameters.

**Response No. 1:** Monitoring frequency for recoverable aluminum, dissolved aluminum, and dissolved copper changed to once per month as requested.

**City of Socorro Comment No. 1:** The City would like to request the requirement for testing for dissolved copper be re-evaluated. The Socorro WWTP has no history of exceeding the effluent limitations for dissolved copper. The effluent concentration of dissolved copper varies between not detectable and 4.7 ug/L since March 2015 through February 2021. A Total Maximum Daily Load for dissolved copper has not been developed by the State, and is not expected to be developed until 2023. The City requests that this condition removed presently, and reopened when the State establishes a TMDL for dissolved copper.

**Response No. 1:** The proposed monitoring for copper is based on the reasonable potential analysis utilizing effluent data with the renewal application. The monitoring frequency has been reduced from three per week to once a month as recommended by NMED. Any data collected can assist in having a TMDL for copper for that particular water body where the WWTP discharges.

**City of Socorro Comment No. 2:** The new permit is proposing to change the monitoring frequency of aluminum from once a month in the current permit to three samples a week in the proposed permit.

The City would like the aluminum testing requirement to be re-evaluated. Historical data does not show any exceedances of aluminum and no changes are anticipated within the service area that would increase aluminum discharge into the sewer system.

The average total aluminum concentrations from March 2015 through February 2021 are 8.3 ug/L. As such, the City requests decreasing dissolved aluminum monitoring frequencies back to once a month. The City further proposes that if an exceedance in aluminum occurs, increased monitoring frequencies can be implemented. The historical data on copper and aluminum is presented below for reference:

Dissolved Aluminum and Dissolved Copper Concentrations in Treated Wastewater at the Socorro WWTP

SAMPLING PERIOD	DISSOLVED AL (MG/L)	DISSOLVED CU (MG/L)
MARCH 2015	0.028	0.0042
FEBRUARY 2016	--	0.0047
FEBRUARY 2017	NOT DETECTED	NOT DETECTED
FEBRUARY 2018	0.0046	0.0047
FEBRUARY 2019	NOT DETECTED	NOT DETECTED
FEBRUARY 2020	0.0090	0.0044
FEBRUARY 2021	NOT DETECTED	0.0038

**Response No. 2:** To comply with State laws, EPA has proposed aluminum effluent limitations per the site-specific TMDL that is in effect for the Middle Rio Grande Watershed. Because a linear partition coefficient for aluminum is not available, the draft permit has proposed effluent limitations for total recoverable aluminum and monitoring the only requirement for dissolved aluminum. The city of Socorro may use dissolved results to demonstrate compliance with its TMDL limit. The monitoring frequency for aluminum has been reduced from three per week to once a month as recommended by NMED.