

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

ITEM 1



St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission

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March 24, 2022

Potomac Riverkeeper Network
c/o Mr. Dean Naujoks
3070 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007

RE: Follow-up to February 24, 2022 Presentation

Dear Mr. Naujoks:

The St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission ("MetCom") wishes to express its appreciation for the Potomac Riverkeeper Network presenting its concerns regarding untreated sewer discharges in the Piney Point Saint George's Island area during the MetCom's February 24, 2022 regular meeting. On behalf of the Board, MetCom would like to address several of the questions raised during the Potomac Riverkeeper Network's power point presentation as follows:

What is METCOM doing to prepare for sea level rise and increased flooding that will cause additional sewer overflows?

MetCom, in conjunction with the local Health Department has requested that the St. Mary's County Government include the evaluation of this future issue through their Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan, and Hazard Mitigation Plan updates. Water and sewer infrastructure could be prone to impact of sea level rise and many low-lying areas throughout the County are served by well and septic systems which could cause an increase in septic system failures. Additionally, MetCom will be performing a Climate Resiliency evaluation of its facilities this year.

What is MetCom's plan to adequately fix its SSO system and stop illegal discharges of untreated sewage into the Potomac and its tributaries?

With respect to the Piney Point / St. George's Island area, a corrective action / implementation plan was forwarded to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). A courtesy copy of the letter to MDE dated January 13, 2021 was forwarded to your attention via email on January 14, 2022. The majority of incidents have been associated with major storm events (i.e. tropical storms, tidal surges, hurricanes, etc.).

What is MetCom doing to improve its public notification of sewage discharges? (Note that posting signs at the point of discharge is not enough - they need to do an online post and notify people and the public in their service area, including oyster growers.)

MetCom exceeds the notice requirements in COMAR. In addition to posting signage at the site of a discharge or SSO, MetCom notifies the Maryland Department of Environment and the St. Mary's County Maryland Health Department (both within 24 hours of a discharge or SSO). Further, MetCom requests a Reverse 911 message, posts notices on Facebook, MetCom's website, and forwards the public notice to the St. Mary's County Public Information Office. In addition, a Public Notification Response Protocols for SSOs was executed between MetCom, the Department of Emergency Services and the Health Department on January 31, 2021. MDE is also the custodian of compliance records and maintains a website with all Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSO's) listed by jurisdiction.

Finally, during discussions with MetCom, we were advised that the Health Department has voluntarily agreed to forward all public notifications from MetCom to the MDE Shellfish Division in order to help improve coordination at the State level, which was confirmed during a meeting with MDE officials on 3-2-2022.

NOTE: For spills outside tidal areas COMAR threshold for public notification is 10,000 gallons and MetCom's SSO protocol threshold is significantly lower at 5,000 gallons.

What is MetCom's plan to upgrade its sewer infrastructure to make it more resistant to sea level rise related flooding? (Plans to raise pump stations or and grinder pumps?)

MetCom currently has 7 water /sewer facilities in the existing flood plain, which are insured as such. MetCom's largest waste water pumping station located in Great Mills, Maryland was recently relocated and elevated out of the floodplain. Elevating grinder pumps and replacing the lids with ventless tops is part of MetCom's plan in areas where there are tidal surge issue recurrences (i.e. St. George's Island). Again, MetCom will be performing a Climate Resiliency evaluation of its facilities this year.

Will MetCom be holding a public meeting to explain its plan to stop the SSO and storm related sewage spills?

This issue has been discussed with the public on several occasions. MetCom has also met with Senator Jack Bailey, representatives of the St. Mary's County and Maryland State Waterman's Associations, and St. Mary's River Waterman's Association on December 13, 2021 to discuss the above. The Chairman of MetCom's Board and MetCom's Executive Director subsequently met with representatives of the St. Mary's River Waterman's Association on February 8, 2022. The Executive Director also spoke to the local Agriculture and Seafood Commission at their February 10,-2022 prior to the Potomac Riverkeeper Network's presentation at MetCom's February meeting.

Has MetCom had any spills or discharges of raw sewage in 2022? If so, where, and how much sewage was spilled?

Yes, MetCom has experienced one (1) incident on January 19, 2022 in California, Maryland (estimated 2,100 gallons due to a sewer line blockage).

Again, thank you for taking the time to provide information to the Board on these issues and I trust this correspondence helps to address the questions raised by the Potomac Riverkeeper Network. In the interim, should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

George A. Erichsen
Executive Director

cc: Metropolitan Commission Board
Christopher Beaver, Legal Counsel
Edward Hogan, Chief of Facilities & Operations
Heather Moritz, St. Mary's County Health Department

ADMINISTRATIVE MOTION

POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER NETWORK

MOVE that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to forward a response letter to Mr. Naujoks addressing inquiries made by the Potomac Riverkeeper Network representative during the February 24, 2022 Commission meeting.