ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 122

[FRL-5533-7]

Interpretive Policy Memorandum on Reapplication Requirements for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
ACTION: Policy statement; interpretation

SUMMARY: By today's notice EPA announces federal policy, signed by Robert Perciasepe, Assistant Administrator for Water, on May 17, 1996, regarding application requirements for renewal or reissuance of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for Municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). Today's action responds to requests from municipalities and NPDES permit writers for clarification about regulations which do not appear to address reapplication requirements, i.e., permit reissuance. Today's notice explains that MS4 permit applicants and NPDES permit writers have considerable discretion to customize propriate and streamlined application requirements on a case-by-case basis, specifically, by using the fourth year annual report as the principal reapplication document.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This policy is effective May 17, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Marilyn Fonseca, Office of Wastewater Management, MC-4203, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street SW., Washington, DC 20460, (202)-260-0592, e-mail: Fonseca.Marilyn@epamail.epa.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The text of this policy is as follows:

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit Reapplication Policy

The 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act added Section 402(p) which directed the Environmental Protection Agency to establish regulations governing storm water discharges under the National pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program. Early in the program, Congress specifically required NPDES permits for municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) serving populations over 100,000. In response, EPA promulgated regulations in 1990 that established permit application requirements for MS4s that serve populations over 100,000. MS4 permits have since been drafted and finalized for many municipal systems. A number of MS4 permits are due to expire and must be reissued.

EPA is providing this policy memorandum to outline permit reapplication requirements for regulated MS4s. There are three components to EPA's reapplication policy. First, EPA is not requiring that the process used for part 1 and 2 of the initial permit application be repeated in full. Second, EPA has identified basic information that should be included in every reapplication package. Finally, EPA is seeking to improve existing MS4 storm water management programs by using information and experience municipalities have gained during the previous permit term.

Is a Permit Reapplication Necessary?

Yes. The requirement that all point source discharges authorized by a NPDES permit must reapply is well Established at 40 CFR 122.41(b) and 122.46(a):

Duty to reapply. If the permittee wishes to continue an activity regulated by this permit after the expiration date of this permit, the permittee must apply for and obtain a new permit.

Duration of permits. NPDES permits shall be effective for a fixed term not to exceed 5 years.

The reapplication requirement is also found at 40 CFR 122.21(d):

Duty to reapply....All other permittees with currently effective permits shall submit a new application 180 days before the existing permit expires.

Therefore, all regulated Phase I MS4s need to participate in a permit reapplication process.

Where a complete reapplication package has been submitted as directed by the permit authority, conditions of an expired MS4 permit will continue until the effective date of a new permit, as stated in 40 CFR 122.6(A) and (b):

(a) EPA permits. When EPA is the permit issuing authority, the conditions of an expired permit continue in force...until the effective date of a new permit...and (b) Effect. Permits continued under this section remain fully effective and enforceable.

Are Initial MS4 Permit Application Requirements Applicable to Permit Reapplication?

No. The scope of the initial permit application requirements was comprehensive and regulated MS4s invested considerable resources to develop these applications. The initial applications have laid the foundation for the long-term implementation of MS4 storm water management programs. EPA believes reapplications should focus on maintenance and improvement of these programs.

The MS4 permit application requirements at 40 CFR 122.26(d)(1) and (2) apply to the first round permit applications required of large and medium MS4s. The permit application deadline regulations in 40 CFR 122.26(e)(3) & (4) clearly reflect the "one time" nature of the Part I & II application requirements for large and medium MS4s. EPA has not promulgated regulations applicable to reapplication for MS4s. Requirements to demonstrate adequate legal authority, perform source identification (e.g., identify major outfalls and facility inventory), characterize data, and develop a storm water management program should have been addressed in the initial application phase. Therefore, to request the same information again, where it has already been provided and has not been changed, would be needlessly redundant. Thus, as a practical matter, most first-time permit application requirements are unnecessary for purposes of second round MS4 permit application.

What Basic Information Must Be Submitted for an MS4 Permit Reapplication?

EPA is committed to allowing permitting authorities to develop flexible reapplication requirements that are site-specific. In the absence of reapplication regulations specific to MS4s, minimum reapplication requirements are drawn from the generic NPDES permit application regulations at 40 CFR 122.21(f). EPA regulations suggest the following basic information be included as part of any permit reapplication:

- name and mailing address(es) of the permittee(s) that operate the MS4, and
- names and titles of the primary administrative and technical contacts for the municipal permittee(s).

In addition, in the reapplication, municipalities should identify any proposed changes or improvements to the storm water management program and monitoring activities for the upcoming five year term of the permit, if those proposed changes have not already been submitted pursuant to 40 CFR 122.42(c). [A requirement to submit proposed changes to the storm water management program is specified in the annual reporting requirements in 40 CFR 122.42(c)(2).] EPA encourages permitting authorities to make use of the fourth year annual report as the basic permit reapplication package.

Changes to the storm water management program may be justified due to the availability of new information on the relative magnitude of a problem or new data on water quality impacts of the storm water discharges. Municipalities may also propose to de-emphasize some program components and strengthen others, based on the experience gained under the first permit. Proposed elimination of a program component might be justified upon permit renewal; for example, when a component is no longer a problem area (i.e., all detention basins have been retrofitted) or when a different water quality program would serve the same goals.

The components of the original storm water management program which are found to be effective should be continued and made an ongoing part of the proposed new storm water management program. Such components may include:

—continued emphasis on public education programs, particularly programs on proper disposal of waste oil and household hazardous waste and pesticide application;
—continued, if not greater, emphasis on addressing impacts of new development/construction;
—proper storm design criteria for all new developments;
—retrofitting and/or upgrading of the existing storm sewer system according to a priority system;
—more frequent maintenance of storm sewer systems and storm water treatment systems;
—coordination with adjacent MS4s on monitoring or other efforts; and
—using a watershed approach to storm water management.

The accumulated annual report information as outlined in 40 CFR 122.42(c) should be evaluated and, to the extent applicable, be incorporated by reference into the reapplication package.

To reiterate, MS4s may use the fourth year annual report, which emphasizes proposed changes to the storm water management program, with the additional required basic information, as the MS4 permit reapplication. Changes to the storm water management program should be jointly developed by the permitting authority and the permit applicant. In this regard, we urge permit issuance authorities and permittees to work together to assure that the permit reapplication is complete and addresses all appropriate issues. The permitting agency may request additional technical information be submitted in the reapplication. NPDES permitting authorities, therefore, can exercise their information gathering authority under CWA Section 308, or analogous State provisions to complete the permit reapplication on a case-by case basis, as appropriate.

What Additional Information Should Be Considered for a Reapplication?

EPA also recommends the following information be provided by reapplicants to the permitting authority, as outlined in 40 CFR 122.26(d)(1)(iv)(C):

—identification of any previously unidentified water bodies that receive discharges from the MS4, and
—a summary of any known water quality impacts on the newly identified receiving waters (based on best available data).

In addition, EPA recommends the following information be provided to the permitting authority as well:

—a description of changes in co-applicants since issuance of initial MS4 permit, and
—identification number of the existing NPDES MS4 permit.

Further, EPA encourages permitting authorities to work with permittees to determine if storm water monitoring efforts are appropriate and useful. For example, during the previous permit term, municipalities may have found that their monitoring program was not fully successful in characterizing the nature and extent of storm water problems. Reapplication is an appropriate time for MS4s to evaluate their monitoring program and propose changes to make the program more appropriate and useful. To accomplish this, municipalities may wish to consider using monitoring techniques other than end-of-the pipe chemical-specific monitoring, including habitat assessments, bioassessments and/or other biological methods.

Permitting authorities should incorporate any such new information, together with assembled materials from the initial application and the existing permit, to form the administrative record for any reissued MS4 permits. Such administrative records should be made publicly available as part of the process to reissue the permit.

Dated: June 28, 1996.

Michael B. Cook,

Director, Office of Wastewater Management.

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