



Sierra Club

Illinois Chapter

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Wauconda Waste Water Plant to Meet Tighter Limits - Sierra Club Accepts Intergovernmental Agreement to Protect Fiddle Creek and Fox River

The Sierra Club has accepted improvements to the Wauconda wastewater treatment plant permit established in an intergovernmental agreement between Lake Barrington and Wauconda. Members and staff of the Club helped guide the negotiations to secure reduced levels of oxygen demanding waste and suspended solids in the effluent and nitrogen limits in the design of the expanding plant. In addition, the agreement requires frequent monitoring of new test wells and of the plant effluent to detect any pollutants before they can affect local wells.

"The permit which Illinois EPA issued to Wauconda last August included phosphorus removal, a big improvement upon the draft we saw at the public hearing," said Dr. Cindy Skrukruud, Clean Water Advocate with the Sierra Club's Illinois Chapter. "Now Wauconda has agreed to place further improvements in the permit, resulting in no increase in the discharge of two common sewage effluent pollutants. And as the villages of Wauconda and Lake Barrington have agreed to work together to find funding for nitrogen removal, Wauconda will become one of a handful of sewage plants in Illinois removing both phosphorus and nitrogen from its effluent."

Discharges of excess nutrients like phosphorus can harm rivers and streams by fueling explosive growth of algae, which sucks oxygen out of the water that fish and other aquatic life need to survive.

As Wauconda increases the capacity of its wastewater treatment plant from 1.4 to 2.4 million gallons per day, these provisions cap the amounts of deoxygenating wastes and suspended solids that it discharges into Fiddle Creek. The village is also designing the plant to remove nitrogen from its effluent in Phase II, and the intergovernmental agreement stipulates that the permit be modified to reflect this.

Recognizing the improvements achieved by the agreement, the Sierra Club is withdrawing its appeal of the permit issued in August by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

"We appealed the permit issued by Illinois EPA to get stronger protection for the waters of Fiddle Creek, the Fox River, and citizens downstream, and this agreement commits the parties to actions that will result in cleaner water," said Jack Darin, director of the Sierra Club's Illinois Chapter, "Now that Wauconda has promised to pursue most of the changes that we sought through this agreement, we feel that our legal action will not be necessary."

The agreement goes beyond limiting damaging pollutants in the effluent.

"We are pleased to have worked with the villages and Cuba Township to develop this intergovernmental agreement because they are committing to pursue improvements beyond the quality of wastewater discharged by the Village of Wauconda. They also promise to work together to restore the natural resources in the Fiddle Creek / Slocum Drainage Ditch watershed," said Evan Craig, volunteer Chair of the Sierra Club's local Woods & Wetlands Group. "Development causes increased burden to our environment, and we call on all the municipalities in Lake County to participate in the common goal of better stewardship of our waters."