

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality

Water Permits Division



The Water Permits Division, a division of the Office of Environmental Services, is responsible for the issuance of Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES) permits, and biosolids/sewage sludge permits/registrations. The division is also responsible for water quality standards development and refinement, water quality assessments, water quality modeling and total maximum daily loads (TMDLs), and Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 401 water quality certifications to CWA Section 404 permits administered by the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Division's operations and daily activities are managed by the Division Administrator who reports to the LDEQ Assistant Secretary for the Office of Environmental Services. The Division Administrator is responsible for coordinating a number of water quality related activities. These include:

- All water permitting and other related activities of the State's LPDES Program for over 13,000 LPDES permits
- Water quality standards review and/or development at least every three years or as needed
- Assessment and reporting on state water quality at least every two years
- Modeling to support TMDL development and refinement
- Review and approval of CWA Section 401 water quality certifications.

The Water Permits Division is comprised of three sections: Administrative; General and Industrial Permits; and Municipal, Biosolids, and Water Quality.

LDEQ was delegated to issue Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES) permits under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program in August 1996. Once an application is received from the Public Participation and Permit Support Division, Permits Application and Administrative Review Group, it is routed to the appropriate Water Permits Division Section for development of a preliminary draft or draft permit.

The General and Industrial Permits Section is comprised of two groups; the Generals Group and the Industrial Group. The section authorizes wastewater discharges from a wide variety of facilities. Examples of wastewater types and/or facility types covered include: construction and industrial stormwater; small sanitary discharges; small industrial discharges covered under general permits; and major and minor industrial facilities such as chemical plants, refineries, barge cleaners, bulk terminals and utility companies.

General Permits Group handles a variety of LPDES master general permit issuance/reissuance and general permit authorizations. The General Permits Group manages 18 of the 22 master general permits and handles a majority of permit

authorizations for all 22. On average, this group processes 700-1000 stormwater and 300-350 non-stormwater Notices of Intent (NOIs) per year. The group issues a small number of minor individual permits per year, generally around ten facilities or less. In addition to the general permit authorizations and minor individual permit issuance, this group also processes about 40 biomonitoring recommendations per year, which is matched to overall average major permit issuance per year. The General Permits Group also issues new master general permits as the need arises.

Industrial Permits Group handles a very diverse group of major industrial permits ranging from large chemical plants, refineries, paper mills, fertilizer plants, pesticides, and utility companies to smaller minor industrial facilities like compressor stations, gas processing plants, ethanol plants, biodiesel, sawmills, barge cleaners, shipyards, oil field service facilities, bulk storage, grain elevators, food processing, metal processing, and seafood processors. This is not an exhaustive list, as this group processes the majority of all industrial LPDES permit applications coming to the Water Permits Division. The Industrial Permits Section issues, on average, about 20-25 major permits per year and about 80-90 minor permits per year.

The **Municipal, Biosolids and Water Quality Section** is comprised of two groups, the Municipal and Biosolids Group and the Water Quality Group. The **Municipal and Biosolids Group** handles permitting for most standalone sanitary wastewater discharges including municipalities, private sanitary wastewater discharges, wastewater from centralized wastewater treaters, and landfills/landfarms; the state sewage sludge and biosolids management program; and wetland assimilation permitting. The **Water Quality Group** is responsible for protecting water resources by setting standards, assessing water quality, and ensuring, through robust evaluation processes, that data used for standards development and water quality assessments are of appropriate type and quality. CWA Section 401 water quality certifications are also handled in this section.

The Municipal and Biosolids Group (MBG) handles all of the major and minor municipalities (Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs)) and private sanitary wastewater discharges not associated with an industrial waste water discharge. In addition, the MBG handles centralized waste treaters and landfills/landfarms. The group issues about 20-25 majors a year and about 80-90 minors a year. The group has 4 master general permits. This group also performs pretreatment reviews/recommendations for all applications that are from publicly owned treatment works: approximately 35 majors and 60 minors. The group performs pretreatment audits to 20% of the cities that have a permitted pretreatment program each year (3 – 4 audits per year). In addition, the MBG issues all the authorization letters under the 5 general permits, upon reissuance, for sanitary discharges (POTWs and private), and construction and debris landfills. The MBG assists with authorizations under general permits, when needed.

The State Sewage Sludge & Biosolids Management Program, within the MBG, handles the regulating and permitting of all generators of sewage sludge for the use or disposal of sewage sludge and biosolids. This affects an estimated 4,000 domestic wastewater treatment facilities; and, also industrial facilities on a case-by-case basis. The *Standards for the Use or Disposal of Sewage Sludge &*

Biosolids regulations are at LAC 33:IX. Subpart 3, Chapter 73 of the Louisiana Environmental Regulatory Code (ERC). Additionally, the registration of Sewage Sludge Haulers was transferred from the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals to LDEQ on July 1, 2009. Approximately 300 sewage sludge haulers are registered in the state. Sewage sludge hauler and hauler vehicle requirements are also found in LAC 33:IX. Subpart 3, Chapter 73 of the ERC.

Wetlands Assimilation Permitting, also within the MBG, processes applications for facilities discharging to wetlands. The facilities discharge at standard secondary limitations and the additional Biochemical Oxygen Demand 5 (BOD5) and Total Suspended Solids (TSS) loading serves to enhance the wetlands.

The Water Quality Group performs functions related to water quality standards; data evaluation, assessment, and reporting; and water quality modeling and TMDLs.

Water Quality Standards reviews, revises and/or develops standards on a three year basis or as needed. Water Quality Standards are comprised of designated uses, water quality criteria and antidegradation policies to protect state waters. Uses of state waters include drinking water, recreation, and habitat for fish and shellfish. Data, literature, modeling, and national, regional, state and local information are used to refine existing or develop new standards to protect designated uses while not creating excessive or unnecessary treatment costs for businesses, industries and municipalities. Water quality standards provide the basis for water quality assessments, pollution allocations, permit limits, ambient surveillance and enforcement, and pollution control strategies for unregulated pollution sources.

Data Evaluation, Assessment and Reporting evaluates the quality of monitoring data, collected internally and/or externally, and using the data to assess water quality throughout the state. Data and information are compared to state surface water quality criteria to determine if water bodies are supporting designated uses. The quality of state waters is reported bi-annually in the CWA Section 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Report.

Water Quality Modeling/TMDLs is responsible for administering Louisiana's Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) Program. The staff actively develops or refines TMDLs and provides review for TMDLs developed by EPA. There are currently about 665 TMDLs in the state. These TMDLs are implemented through water permits (point source loads) and Watershed Implementation Plans (WIP, nonpoint source loads). Water quality modeling staff are responsible for the review of applications to withdraw surface water from state water bodies.

CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certifications are handled under the Municipal, Biosolids, and Water Quality Section. A CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certification is required for all Army Corps of Engineers CWA Section 404 permits which involve "discharge of fill material into the waters of the United States." The CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certification assures that any dredge and fill activity permitted under a CWA Section 404 permit will be

protective of site specific water quality standards. About 700 applications are received per year. Of these, 350 require certifications to be issued.