



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Matt Davison

matt@martingroupmarketing.com

(716) 604-7772

Follow-up Statement from the Niagara Falls Water Board

Following the October 4, 2017 wet weather event that resulted in a discharge/overflow from NFWB's wastewater system, the board wishes to communicate to the public the ongoing actions it continues to undertake toward improving operations at the wastewater treatment plant. Many of these measures are the result of efforts underway for several months.

Staffing

In recent months, the NFWB has filled several vacancies at the wastewater treatment plant created by turnover, including hiring four new Operator-Trainees and is in the process of hiring two more Operator-Trainees. It has also promoted four of its employees to Shift Operations Supervisor positions. NFWB's staffing decisions are designed to ensure a robust workforce that is ready to meet all challenges.

Training Initiatives

Both its wastewater treatment plant operators and management team are continuing to participate in training programs to enhance their skills while optimizing the existing wastewater system. This training was planned, and the NFWB approved funding for the training, prior to July 29, 2017, but NFWB training will be modified as appropriate to address issues related to that incident.

The NFWB is covering the cost for any of its operators who are willing to attend State Certified Operator Training courses, which are offered and presented by the Great Lakes Laboratories at Buffalo State College. FFWB also will be hiring a tutor for its employees in order to assist them in completing Certified Operator Training. This training will allow employees to obtain deeper knowledge and licenses that will strengthen NFWB's workforce and facilitate employee advancement.

Additionally, the NFWB has organized a training group to prepare an objective-based training program, with classroom and hands-on training for specific wastewater treatment plant job responsibilities. Meanwhile, management is participating in a 12-module leadership-training program, which will continue into 2018.

Improved Maintenance Through Asset Management Technology

Following NFWB approval in May 2017 of upgrades to the software system, NFWB staff is leveraging an electronic asset management program. Called Lucity, this upgraded software system will identify every asset at the wastewater treatment plant, input the standard operating procedures for each asset, and assign the appropriate maintenance for each asset.

Maintenance Management Underway

The NFWB has approved a maintenance management contract with GHD, an international professional services firm that specializes in the safety, quality and effectiveness of water systems. As part of its maintenance management program, GHD will review all manufacturers' materials for all of the treatment plant's equipment to assess maintenance procedures, any parts needed and appropriate maintenance schedules. GHD will also develop an action-oriented maintenance strategy with specific

tasks and schedules for each piece of equipment, and it will input this information into the Lucy asset management software.

3D Scanning to Enhance Maintenance, System Effectiveness

Another initiative that was underway prior to July 29, 2017, is 3D scanning. The NFWB is in the process of 3D scanning all of its buildings and equipment. This will ensure the NFWB has identified the status and needs of all equipment in operation, while organizing the necessary information available for each piece of equipment. The data gathered through this 3D scanning will be available to all relevant and approved employees for use as needed. This information will likely be used by engineers, contractors, trainers, maintenance employees and operators to optimize the existing system.

Ongoing Optimization of System Processes

As described above, even before July 29, 2017 the NFWB was engaged in continual investment and upgrades to its human and physical assets, in order to obtain the best possible performance.

For near-term process changes since July 29, 2017, the NFWB is working with DEC and outside contractors to optimize its wastewater system operations. NFWB has:

- Engaged a contractor to assist with solids management. This outside contractor will provide the NFWB with temporary support to increase solids removal and help optimize existing equipment.
- Enacted a plan to take necessary steps to use its off-line sedimentation basins during wet-weather events, which will enhance storage capabilities and equalize plant flows.
- Continued working with DEC to put its sedimentation basin #5 back online—a critical action for plant operations. New procedures will be implemented to ensure continued compliance with respect to all plant effluent, including adding processes to verify that the basin's sediment-removal equipment is fully operational.

While aging infrastructure and system design limitations impact overall facility capacity during heavy volume periods, extensive efforts remain underway to identify additional short and long-term solutions to mitigate these existing facility constraints, which in effect cause wet weather discharge and overflow situations. Specifically, the existing wastewater treatment facility has a treatment capacity of approximately 60 million gallons over the course of a day. This capacity limit is impacted by the outdated carbon filter system through which flows must pass for treatment. Most modern wastewater plants treating waste streams similar to what the NFWB plant treats use a biological – not chemical/physical with carbon-filtration – treatment process. NFWB's system lacks substantial storage facilities, so when flows exceed the plant's treatment capacity due to heavy rain, a discharge or overflow cannot be avoided. NFWB is examining long-term solutions to these issues, including converting its wastewater treatment plant to a biological technology, and constructing additional storage capacity, to reduce untreated or partially treated wastewater overflows.

The NFWB continues to call attention to the need for major state and federal investment in capital infrastructure improvements at outdated wastewater treatment facilities across the Great Lakes watershed. State-of-the art solutions to the challenges facing aging wastewater treatment systems come with a substantial cost, and it is vital that state and federal elected officials support such necessary investment.

The NFWB remains wholly committed to proper wastewater treatment and the distribution of the highest-quality drinking water consistent with public health laws and regulations, as well as the public enjoyment of natural resources, the protection of fish and wildlife, the economic development of the city of Niagara Falls and the general well-being of the surrounding area.

The NFWB will continue to provide periodic public and ratepayer updates on overflow and other discharge matters as such information becomes available, via www.NFWB.org.

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