



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Official Statement from the Niagara Falls Water Board

On Monday, October 9, 2017, a wet weather event – heavy and prolonged rainfall – in Niagara Falls resulted in a discharge/overflow from the NFWB’s wastewater system. As with other recent overflow events, this resulted from the volume of flow into the NFWB wastewater system exceeding the system’s existing storage and plant processing capacity. NFWB has no way of controlling for color or turbidity with respect to the overflow water during a wet weather event.

Such overflows happen because 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 This capacity limit is impacted by the outdated carbon filter system through which flows must pass for treatment.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.

This overflow was immediately reported to DEC officials, pursuant to their recent instructions. NFWB continues to work to optimize its existing wastewater treatment system, and is committed to providing the best treatment possible using its existing technology.

As NFWB has made clear in previous statements, 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.

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to call attention to the need for major state and federal investment in capital infrastructure improvements at outdated wastewater treatment facilities across the Great Lakes watershed.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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