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L C A S t a t e m e n t

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RE: EPA Closes Out Federal Order for Regional Sewer System

Earlier today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency accepted the region's plan to address sanitary sewer overflows and provided notice to Lehigh County Authority (LCA) and the City of Allentown that the parties have completed the requirements of the Administrative Orders EPA issued about a decade ago to address the problem. In the letter, EPA Water Protection Division Director Catherine Libertz handed the program over to state regulators to oversee, noting that EPA will continue to monitor the region's work on the issues.

Last summer, LCA joined the City and 13 other municipalities in preparing a regional flow management strategy to address wet-weather system challenges that cause overflows at the regional wastewater treatment plant in Allentown, and from manholes in other locations throughout the system. The strategy represented a cooperative and collaborative effort among all municipalities to eliminate leakage into the nearly 900 miles of sanitary sewer system pipes that run throughout western and central Lehigh County, including Allentown. The leakage comes from a variety of sources including aging sewer pipes, leaking customer laterals, unauthorized connection of sump pumps and roof drains into the sewer system, and aging or damaged manholes.

LCA views the EPA release of the Administrative Order as a clear sign that collaboration works. The municipalities have worked together to develop a plan that will work to solve the system issues we are experiencing.

However, it also means there is still a lot of work to do. EPA's letter indicates the region is on the right path to addressing sewer system overflows, but we must all continue to do the work to upgrade and maintain our systems in order to address ongoing wet-weather challenges.

Part of the regional flow management strategy also includes significant capital improvements for many of the municipal sewer systems, including LCA's. These projects will need to be coordinated with local officials and state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) officials to ensure the projects are properly designed, permitted and funded. Within the next five years, LCA plans to spend about \$18.5 million on sewer interceptor upgrades and removal of rainfall derived inflow and infiltration.

LCA is looking forward to collaborating with DEP on the ongoing needs of the regional sewer system, including development of additional strategies to address the impacts of wet-weather and future growth in Lehigh County.

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