



# Environmental Update

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 24, 2003

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

The Mississippi Commission on Environmental Quality September Meeting was held in conjunction with the Southeastern Environmental Quality Conference in Biloxi. In lieu of Executive Director Charles Chisholm giving a report, the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, (DMR) **Dr. William Walker** addressed the Commission and the attendees at the meeting. Dr. Walker commented on his recent appointment and the goals for DMR. In his address, Walker stressed the need for better communication and co-ordination between DMR and its sister agencies, including MDEQ, and he pledged to organize a workshop for the Environmental Agencies to meet and discuss ways to better communicate and work together.

**Phil Bass**, Director of Pollution Control, next reported on the progress of the Beach Monitoring Program and the challenges ahead for that program.

COMMISSION ACTIONS:

Due to the meeting being held in conjunction with the Southeastern Environmental Conference, the Commission did not consider a regular agenda. The Commission did announce that it had issued 6 Underground Storage Tank certifications, 104 Asbestos certifications, and 12 Administrative Orders since the last Commission meeting.

In lieu of Commission action, **Jimmy Palmer**, the Regional Administrator for Region IV of the United States Environmental Protection Agency briefed the Commission. Mr. Palmer, a former MDEQ Executive Director, reflected upon his tenure at MDEQ. Mr. Palmer stated that he now appreciates the strength of Mississippi's environmental protections which have been enacted over the years, and in particular, Mississippi's strong water quality laws and the regulations that are so important to the quality of life in the State. Mr. Palmer also recognized the valuable services MDEQ administrators and staff provide.

In his remarks Palmer noted that services provided by MDEQ staff when compared to other states in the region, are a superior example of solid programs and the depth of veteran public servants. Palmer noted that the work performed by MDEQ staff continued to provide great service in their efforts to preserve and protect the environment while balancing the economic development needs of Mississippi communities. Mr. Palmer concluded that the EPA's expectations would not be reduced notwithstanding the lack of funding MDEQ and other agencies are experiencing as a result of budget reductions across the region.

Following Mr. Palmer's address, Kelly Riley, MDEQ Attorney, requested an amendment to the August Commission meeting minutes to reflect a correction in the action taken by the Commission on the matter of White Hall vs. White Hall Water Association in Winston County. The minutes shall be corrected to reflect that the only action taken and approved by the Commission was to deny the request for an evidentiary hearing by the landowner, White Hall.

NEXT MEETING

The Commission's next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 23, 2003 at 9:00 a.m. at the **Tunica River Park, in Tunica, Mississippi.**

## OTHER ITEMS

On October 1, 2003, The Justice Department and the Environmental Protection Agency announced Clean Air Act settlements with Coastal Eagle Point Oil Company, CHS Inc., Ergon-West Virginia Inc., and Ergon Refining Inc. These companies have a collective production capacity of approximately 285,000 barrels per day and will reduce air emissions by more than 3,900 tons per year under the terms of settlements being filed with U.S. District Courts in New Jersey, Montana, and Mississippi. The agreements address nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide and particulate emissions. The refiners will also reduce other emissions of hazardous air pollutants, including benzene, at refineries located in **Vicksburg**, among other locations. The Vicksburg refinery will install and implement innovative control technologies to reduce emissions from their largest emitting units. In addition, it will significantly upgrade its leak detection and repair practices, implement programs to minimize the number and severity of flaring events and adopt new strategies for ensuring continued compliance with benzene waste requirements under the Clean Air Act's National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants. A portion of the more than \$2.9 million in civil penalties will provide improved equipment for first responders in Mississippi. MDEQ participated and is joining in this settlement. After the settlement is lodged, it will be open to public comment for 30 days.

EPA Assistant Administrator for Water G. Tracy Mehan III announced that the Agency has taken strong steps to further protect and safeguard the nation's drinking water and wastewater systems from terrorist acts by forming a new Water Security Division. This Division will continue the important work undertaken by the Water Protection Task Force that EPA established in October 2001. "Shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, the Bush Administration strengthened efforts already underway to promote security at America's public water facilities," said Mehan. "We are working closely with our stakeholders coast to coast to provide them with the resources and support they need as they find themselves facing increased responsibilities to protect the water supplies of their customers." To date, the original Task Force has supported numerous activities to improve security of drinking water and wastewater utilities. Major accomplishments that the Water Security Division will enhance include:

Awarding \$51 million in grants directly to large drinking water systems to assist compliance with the requirements of the "Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002." Out of 466 total systems, 464 have submitted vulnerability assessments to EPA.

Awarding over \$30 million in grants to the States, tribes, and non-profit organizations to provide tools, training and technical assistance to small and medium drinking water systems as well as wastewater utilities on vulnerability assessments and related security work.

Supporting the establishment of the WaterISAC, a state-of-the-art, secure information system that shares up-to-date threat and incident information between the intelligence community and the water sector.

Developing and implementing a comprehensive research plan to address water security needs along with EPA's Office of Research and Development.

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act, EPA works closely with partner organizations -- government agencies and drinking water and waste water utilities and associations -- to ensure clean and safe water. Industry and government are also working to improve drinking water and waste water security. Building on and supporting long-established relationships with its partners, EPA helps the water sector to understand and utilize the best scientific information and technologies for water security, support assessment of utilities' vulnerabilities to possible attack, take action to improve security, and respond effectively and efficiently in the event that an incident occurs.

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