

Our Wastewater Management Plan

By Morris Township Engineering Department

The State of New Jersey requires that every Town that operates a sewage treatment plant file a Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). Such WMPs are required to describe how and from where wastewater is collected, treated, and disposed of, as well as other information designed to assure that the groundwater and other elements of our environment are protected.

Management of wastewater in terms of its proper treatment and disposal is the objective of the WMP. Proper wastewater management protects your water quality and enables the Township to ensure that areas identified for 'Smart Growth' have sufficient access to the Township's two wastewater treatment facilities and that the capacities of those facilities are not exceeded.

Plan elements include mapping of the sewer areas in the Township. The mapping determines which properties can and cannot be connected to the Township's wastewater treatment facilities. The WMP also identifies those areas where existing soil characteristics qualify for wastewater treatment by on-site facilities (septic systems) followed by subsurface disposal.

Contrary to some reports, the Township of Morris has been working on your WMP for over a decade. For the last 12 years, the Township has made every attempt to satisfy the evolving requirements of the various individuals and representatives of NJDEP.

With each submission of the WMP, the Township addressed every comment raised by the NJDEP reviewers. However, as NJDEP's internal reviewers and directors came and went, new comments and additional requirements were presented with each review.

The NJDEP approved the sewer service area mapping which was used for sizing the wastewater treatment plants when they were upgraded in 1992. However, the current NJDEP administration does not like the mapping that their own department previously approved. So part of the current revision process has involved changes to the sewer service areas.

NJDEP's failure to complete their review of our submissions in a timely manner, has made the Township's WMP subject to ever-changing requirements and regulations. Fortunately, over the years, this has not had much effect on the residents of the Township. Until recently, NJDEP has routinely approved our actual sewer extension requests for various Morris Township neighborhoods, even without an approved WMP.

Every Township submission has met the requirements of N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.23 and was clearly comprehensive enough to warrant NJDEP moving ahead with public notification and adoption of the WMP. In light of the history outlined, it is difficult to see how the "Township has been dragging its feet" as stated by NJDEP Commissioner Bradley Campbell, or is "ten years late in



Volumes of paperwork attest to our numerous efforts to gain approval from NJDEP for Morris Township's Waste Water Management Plan (WMP) for over 12 years.
Photo by Morris Twp. Engineering Department.

preparing its WMP" as stated by the Great Swamp Watershed Association.

Given this long history of review, it is also difficult to comprehend how NJDEP can label our WMP as "not credible". This is especially true when one takes into account the fact that the most recent WMP submission was the most comprehensive to date, utilizing GIS mapping technology with integration of the sewer billing data base and including environmental protection ordinances that were specifically provided to the Township by NJDEP for inclusion in the WMP.

One of those areas identified by the Township of Morris for 'Smart Growth' that falls within the sewer service area identified in the WMP is the Continuing Care Retirement Community or (CCRC). The CCRC zone was approved by the Township as part of its extensive Master Plan Review. With the creation of the CCRC zone, and provided NJDEP approves the necessary environmental permits for the CCRC, the Township will be able to preserve, in perpetuity, over 130 acres of open space at no cost to you, the taxpayer. The Township's Planning Board was even recognized by the New Jersey Planning Officials with an Achievement In Planning Award for "Recognizing Need and Effecting a Key Zoning Change" with the creation of the CCRC zone.

The Township was sued by the Great Swamp Watershed Association with the claim of spot-zoning. The Township was vindicated when the Judge in the case decided in favor of the Township. Judge Bozonelis also lauded the Township's Master Plan and Ordinance as being a result of comprehensive planning by the Township that manifests the interests of the State's Development and Redevelopment Plan. Although the Great Swamp Watershed has filed an appeal, the Township is confident that Judge Bozonelis's decision will be upheld.

All the information regarding the WMP is available to you in the Township's Engineering Department. Our staff is available to answer any questions you may have on your Wastewater Management Plan.