

## Water Pollution Permit Fees

The current fees for permits issued by the Department of Natural Resources for the construction and operation of wastewater treatment facilities have not been increased since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not even for inflation. The state of Missouri now administers more than 14,000 water pollution permits, due, in part, to the high number of direct dischargers we have (facilities that do not send waste to a treatment plant first).

Fees from facilities now cover less than one-third the cost of the water pollution control program.

Other sources of funding for the program—the state General Revenue fund and federal grants—have been cut significantly and no increases are envisioned. (General Revenue down by half from 2004).

### Projected FY11 Revenues:

**Permit Fees 28%; General revenue – 23%; Federal Funds 37%; with a shortfall of 12%**

See <http://dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/cwppindex.html>

With this budget shortfall, renewing permit fees at their present level would require services to be severely reduced—and water quality protection to be greatly compromised. In fact, the entire water protection program is endangered by this shortfall because the Environmental Protection Agency can rescind the Clean Water Act program if MDNR fails to fund it.

### Why Is This Important?

DNR is entrusted with the responsibility of enforcing the federal Clean Water Act and state regulations to ensure that water quality and human health are protected in Missouri.

DNR has recently outlined a strategy to expand its water quality monitoring—for a more accurate picture of Missouri's streams and lakes, improved permit writing, and greater overall efficiency.

With no increase in permit fees, however, the water protection program would be slashed, causing:

- heavier permit backlogs and longer delays in permit processing;
- reductions in monitoring and less data on which to base permit limits—requiring more conservative permit limits while increasing risks to water quality and people's health;
- no state certifications for dredging and filling of streams and lakes; and
- fewer inspections and less enforcement, leaving Missouri's waters more exposed to illegal and dangerous pollution while reducing the penalties that help support the program.

## **What Should Be Done?**

Permit fees should be increased to give the water pollution control program a stronger, more stable funding base, with polluters picking up more of the tab.

The sectors that are not paying their fair share (CAFOs and developers) should see an increase that more fairly reflects the actual costs of running those programs.

DNR would then be better able to serve those seeking permits while performing the monitoring and enforcement needed to protect water quality. An increase in permit fees would allow:

- Elimination of backlogs for operating and construction permits and water quality studies;
- Faster permit processing with more consistent pollutant limits;
- Better, more complete data on the condition of Missouri's streams, lakes, and wetlands;
- Permit limits better targeted to particular discharges and receiving streams;
- Assessment of permit program effectiveness and investigation of water quality issues; and
- More rigorous enforcement to resolve violations, collect delinquent fees and penalties, and maintain a level playing field for all facilities.