## STATE OF WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

PUBLIC NOTICE OF INFORMATIONAL HEARING AND INTENT TO REISSUE A WISCONSIN POLLUTANT DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM (WPDES) PERMIT No.WI-0020150-11-0

Permittee: City of Merrill, 1004 E. First Street, Merrill, WI 54452

Facility Where Discharge Occurs: Merrill WWTF, 2606 Sturdevant Street, Merrill, WI

Receiving Water And Location: Wisconsin River within the Prairie River Watershed in the Upper Wisconsin River Basin in Lincoln County

Brief Facility Description: The City of Merrill Wastewater Treatment Facility is an activated sludge facility which consists of mechanical screening (removes debris) with bar screen backup and grit removal via an aerated grit chamber. It includes three primary clarifiers where solids are allowed to settle. Flow then enters two aeration tanks where it mixes with activated sludge which breaks down the organic matter. Activated sludge is composed of settled solids containing naturally occurring bacteria recycled from the treatment system. The water is then pumped into two final clarifiers where remaining solids are settled out. Alum is added following primary clarification to facilitate the precipitation of phosphorus. Some of the sludge is returned to the head of the aeration tanks to re-seed the new wastewater entering the tank while the rest of the sludge is sent to waste. The settled solids (sludge) from the system that are not used as activated sludge are removed, thickened, and treated by bacteria and organisms through anaerobic digestion; reducing harmful pathogens to safe levels. Water is removed from the sludge via a belt press before it is landspread on Department approved agricultural sites. The wastewater is seasonally disinfected (May – September) via chlorination and then dechlorinated via sodium bisulfite. Caustic soda is added for pH adjustment. Effluent is discharged on a continuous basis via Outfall 001 to the North bank of the Wisconsin River, approx. 1.1 miles downstream of Center Ave.

Summary of Proposed Changes: 1) Changes to the influent monitoring requirements are as follows: changed flow rate sample type to Daily; changed BOD5 and CBOD5 sample type to 24-Hr Flow Prop Comp; removed hexachlorobenzene monitoring; and reduced BOD5 sample frequency to monthly. 2) Changes to the effluent monitoring requirements are as follows: fecal coliform monitoring and limits have been replaced with Escherichia coli (E. coli) monitoring and limits; decreased the mercury variance alternative effluent limit to 8.5 ng/L as a daily maximum (from 9.85 ng/L) and updated pollutant minimization program (PMPs) throughout the permit term; addition of TMDL-based effluent mass limits for total phosphorus; addition of monthly effluent monitoring for one year for ammonia nitrogen and copper; addition of PFOS/PFOA monitoring at a frequency of every other month in accordance with s. NR 106.98(2), Wis. Adm. Code; updated the monitoring quarters for the acute whole effluent toxicity (WET) testing; and removed hexachlorobenzene monitoring. 3) Changes to the land application monitoring requirements are as follows: the year in which PCB monitoring is required has been updated to 2026; and addition of annual PFAS (PFOA + PFOS) monitoring pursuant to s. NR 204.06(2)(b)9., Wis. Adm. Code. 4) Addition of the following Schedules: Mercury Pollutant Minimization Program; and PFOS/PFOA Minimization Plan Determination of Need.

Permit Drafter's Name, Address, Phone and Email: Sarah Donoughe, DNR, 2984 Shawano Ave, Green Bay, WI 54313-6727, (920) 366-6076, Sarah.Donoughe@wisconsin.gov

Basin Engineer's Name, Address, Phone and Email: Amy Garbe, DNR, 141 NW Barstow St, Room 180, Waukesha, WI 53188, (608) 716-9968, Amy.Garbe@wisconsin.gov

The Department has tentatively decided that the above-specified WPDES permit should be reissued.

Limitations and conditions which the Department believes adequately protect the receiving water are included in the proposed permit. Land application of waste shall be done in accordance with permit conditions and applicable codes. All land application sites shall be approved prior to their use. To receive a list of approved sites, or to be notified of potential approvals, contact the above-named basin engineer.

Proposed Mercury Variance: The Department has determined that a water quality-based effluent limitation (WQBEL) of 1.3 ng/L for mercury is needed to protect wildlife and human health in the above-named receiving water. The permittee has applied for an alternative mercury effluent limitation (AMEL). The application included a pollutant minimization program (PMP) plan for mercury as required under s. NR 106.145(8), Wis. Adm. Code. The Department concludes that the permittee is eligible for a variance based on the information submitted, information on file and the findings provided in s. NR 106.145(1), Wis. Adm. Code. The Department and the permittee have mutually agreed upon an AMEL of 8.5 ng/L, expressed as a daily maximum, continued influent and effluent monitoring, and permit language requiring implementation of the PMP. The Department proposes to grant the AMEL, which represents a variance to the water quality standard used to derive the WQBEL, as provided for under s. NR 106.145(6), Wis. Adm. Code. The designated use of the receiving water will not change as a result of the variance. This mercury variance must be approved by USEPA prior to its inclusion in the final reissued permit.

Hearing Officer, Name, Address, City/State/Zip, and Phone: Sarah Donoughe, DNR, 2984 Shawano Ave, Green Bay, WI 54313-6727, (920) 366-6076

The Department of Natural Resources, pursuant to s. 283.49, Wis. Stats, has scheduled for the time and place listed above, a public hearing for the purpose of giving all interested persons an opportunity to make a statement with respect to the above announced permit action for this existing discharge.

A hearing officer will conduct the hearing in an orderly and speedy way and will use procedures specified in Subchapter II of ch. NR 203, Wis. Adm. Code, necessary to insure broad public participation in the hearing.

The hearing officer will open the hearing and make a concise statement of the scope and purpose of the hearing and shall state what procedures will be used during the course of the hearing. The hearing officer shall explain the method of notification of the final decision to grant or deny the permit and the methods by which the decision may be reviewed in a public adjudicatory hearing.

The hearing officer may put limits on individual oral statements to ensure an opportunity for all persons present to make statements in a reasonable period of time and to prevent undue repetition. The hearing officer may also limit the number of representatives making oral statements on behalf of any person or group.

Informational and clarifying questions and oral statements shall be directed through the hearing officer. Cross-examination shall not be allowed.

Persons wishing to comment on or object to the proposed permit action are invited to do so by attending the public hearing or by submitting any comments or objections in writing to the Department of Natural Resources, at the above-named permit drafter's address. All comments or suggestions received from members of the public no later than 7 days following the date of this public hearing will be used, along with other information on file and testimony presented at the hearing, in making a final determination. Where designated as a reviewable surface water discharge permit, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is allowed up to 90 days to submit comments or objections regarding this permit determination.

Information on file for this permit action, including the draft permit, fact sheet and permit application, may be inspected and copied at either the above-named permit drafter's office or the above named basin engineer's office, Monday through Friday (except holidays), between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Please call the permit drafter or basin engineer for directions to their office location, if necessary. Information on this permit action may also be obtained by calling the permit drafter at (920) 662-5148 or by writing to the Department. Reasonable costs (15 cents per page for copies and 7 cents per page for scanning) will be charged for information in the file other than the public notice, permit and fact sheet. Permit information is also available on the internet at:

<u>http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wastewater/PublicNotices.html</u>. Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation, including the provision of informational material in an alternative format, will be made to qualified individuals upon request.

NAME OF PUBLISHING NEWSPAPER: Merrill Foto News

ADDRESS OF PUBLISHING NEWSPAPER: 2011 E Main Street, Merrill, WI 54452

Date Notice Issued: Thursday, December 19, 2024