

Louie Flora

From: Evans, Renee L (DEC) [renee.evans@alaska.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, October 17, 2007 11:23 AM

To: Louie Flora

Cc: Stambaugh, Sharmon M (DEC)

Subject: Homer Honey Bear Septage Disposal Facility

Attachments: The status of the engineering study for the facility.doc; To Whom it may concern.doc

<<The status of the engineering study for the facility.doc>> <<To Whom it may concern.doc>>

Mr. Flora - I have attached answers to your questions regarding the status of the engineering reviews/approvals for the Homer Honey Bear Septage Facility and a copy of a letter to be sent to the complainants. I apologize the for the delay. The plan review research took longer than expected and we were waiting for the results of the monitoring well samples. If you have any further questions regarding this facility please let me know. Thank-you,
Renee Evans/ADEC

DEC LETTER TO HONEY BEAR COMPLAINANTS

2007

To whom it may concern:

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation has received six complaints regarding the Homer Honey Bear Septage Facility located at approximately mile 148.7 of the Sterling Highway.

The complaints allege that septage in excess of 1500 gallons per day is being discharged into the facility, the monitoring wells at the facility are non-functional and odors are present outside the facility.

On June 7, 2007 ADEC staff inspected the Homer Honey Bear Facility. The inspection began at 11 am, the outside temperature was approximately 50 degrees Fahrenheit and the wind was blowing at approximately 10 miles per hour to the east. The facility was located within a fenced, locked area.

ADEC staff reviewed records of the facility. In 1983 the facility was designed and approved to allow an average of 1500 gallons per day of septage to be discharged into the facility on a daily basis. Since that time the facility has been upgraded and is now designed to allow an average of 6000 gallons per day of septage to be discharged. The original amount of 1500 gallons per day of discharge is found in the permit for the facility. The additional discharge of 4500 gallons per day is acknowledged by a plan review in lieu of a permit which is allowed by State of Alaska regulation. The current administratively extended permit will be reissued to reflect, both the current permit and plan review limit of 6000 gallons per day of discharge.

Four monitoring wells are located at the facility to monitor the groundwater and verify water quality standards are being met. All wells are operational. One downgradient well was located outside the fenced area, but within the property boundary. Current sample results show that all water quality parameters are being met. A previous sampling event showed one problem with a lower than normal pH in well #4. The permit requires a pH of not less than 6.5, the pH of well #4 last fall was 6.3. Well #4 is located outside the fenced area. The operator indicated this well had been tampered with and he had replaced and put a better lock on this well.

During the inspection ADEC staff walked along the outside of the fenced area, no odors were evident on the outside of the fenced area. The owner discharged approximately 1500 gallons of septage into the facility during the inspection and ADEC did not detect odors offsite during this discharge. Staff also walked from the facility east toward the Sterling Highway during the time septage was being discharged. The wind was blowing toward the east; no odors were evident within 50 feet on the west side of the Sterling Highway.

No violations of the wastewater disposal permit or the State of Alaska regulations for disposal of wastewater, 18 AAC 72, were noted during our investigations. The facility appeared to be well operated and maintained. ADEC considers the complaint investigation closed at this time.

1. The status of the engineering study for the facility. Per the e-mail below from Katie Shows in this office, DEC had requested a copy of the design from the permit holder. Did the department receive this study, and if so, does the existing facility comport with the designed facility?

ADEC received the first set of plans for the facility in 1983. These plans were approved and the facility received its first wastewater permit in 1983. The facility has been upgraded several times over the past 24 years and is currently designed and approved to accept an average of 6000 gallons per day.

2. Have design standards changed at all since this facility was initially and re-permitted?

Current design standards are similar to what they were when the facility was first permitted in 1983.

3. In their letter of May 30th, 2007 (copies faxed to DEC in June) the complainants contend that the type of discharge into the facility may be illegal as it may require additional processing prior to discharge. What type of discharge is permitted for this facility, and did the site inspection include a monitoring of discharge into the facility as it occurred?

Septage from septic tanks is being discharged into the facility. The facility was designed and permitted for this discharge. No additional processing of this type of discharge is required. ADEC staff was onsite as a discharge from the pumper truck occurred.

4. The May 30th letter states that "the permit" allows for no more than 1500 gallons per day to be dumped into the facility. This is stated in a letter from DEC dated January 16, 2001 as well (from William McGee). As our office understands from conversations with DEC currently 6000 gallons per day is allowed into the facility. When did this increase from the originally permitted amount occur? Did the facility increase to roughly four times the 2001 size at some point to accommodate the increased volume?

The facility has increased in size over several years. The facility originally had a primary lined cell and one trench. There are currently 8 trenches in series being used to treat the wastewater.

5. The January 2001 letter from DEC explains that a minimum of 4 monitoring wells are required. Did DEC staff find these four wells to be in working order? If the size of the facility increased from a 1500 gallon per day maximum to a 6000 gallon per day maximum, does DEC require more monitoring wells?

All monitoring wells are currently functioning and operational. As the facility expands more frequent monitoring may be required, but the number of monitoring wells required will not increase. Most subsurface disposal systems require one upgradient and three downgradient monitoring wells.

6. Despite the finding of DEC staff that odor was not an issue at the facility, what recourse do concerned neighbors have if they find that the odor is impacting their quality of life/property values?

Odors are an issue that is usually dealt with at a local level, i.e. city or borough government level. This is done by land use restrictions and ordinances only allowing certain types of businesses within zoned residential areas. Most landowners work with their local government on zoning.

7. Has DEC staff formally drafted a letter in response to the letters from Dick and Carol Whitney (May 30th, 2007) and Larry Rozak (October 16th 2006) included in the material faxed to the department in June? Has staff contacted these parties to discuss the results of the site visit?

The Department will provide the complainants with a copy of this letter, which includes information from the site visit. This letter is attached.