

## Fact Sheet: Slaughterhouse/Meat Processor Groundwater Discharge Permit

### *What is a groundwater discharge permit?*

A groundwater discharge permit regulates wastewater, washwater, and cooling water that is not discharged through a municipal wastewater system. Permits and requirements can vary significantly, depending on your operation and type of wastewater.

### *What industries are covered by groundwater discharge permits?*

Activities like cooling, washing, processing, or packing fruits or vegetables (including cleaning dirt off root crops such as potatoes or sugar beets), producing wine, beer, or spirits, slaughter and/or processing of meat, eggs, and dairy products, cleaning trucks, and some other on-farm activities will generally require a permit or some level of reporting to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (MDEGLE).

### *Why should I care about the slaughterhouse/meat processors groundwater discharge permit if I do not have a permit or work directly with a permittee?*

MDEGLE intends on updating other groundwater discharge permits that may impact agriculture or agricultural processing (fruit processing, vegetable processing, wineries, etc.). The new permit for slaughterhouses and meat processors could serve as a template for those permits. As such, all sectors of the agricultural industry may want to review the conditions of this permit to preview potential changes in their own industries.

### *What is happening now with the slaughterhouse/meat processor general permit?*

Since 2019, MDEGLE has been working on updating the groundwater discharge permit for slaughterhouses and meat processors. The permit was released for public comment in April, the final version was released October 21<sup>st</sup>, and the final permit goes into effect November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

### *What are the changes being made to the permit?*

#### Improvements:

- The permit includes a higher gallons per day flow allowance. It was increased from 2,000 gallons per day to 20,000 gallons per day.
  - **Why it's positive:** This allows more facilities to fall under the general permit versus an individual permit, providing more regulatory certainty and potentially reducing permit costs.
- The co-mingling of sanitary sewage and processing wastewater is allowed for most treatment options under the permit.
  - **Why it's positive:** Some operations have sanitary sewage intermingled with their wastewater infrastructure, which would potentially be expensive to separate.
- The permit allows users to choose from multiple options for treating wastewater in order to comply with the permit.
  - **Why it's positive:** This provides flexibility for meat processors and slaughterhouses to comply using the option that works best for them.
- MDEGLE set land application timing based on field conditions versus prohibiting land application during set months.

- **Why it's positive:** This provides application flexibility and makes more sense based on Michigan's variable weather.

#### Tighter Requirements:

- For some treatment options, the total inorganic nitrogen (ammonia, nitrate, and nitrite nitrogen) has been significantly decreased from 35 mg/L to 10 mg/L. This may represent a considerable cost for facilities to meet this requirement.
- New requirements for limits on phosphorous concentrations have been added, depending on proximity to surface water.
- New requirements for biological oxygen demand have been added, with land application limits being set at 50 pounds per acre per day.
- Monthly sampling of wastewater is a requirement for most treatment options in the permit. This is an increase from sampling annually in the previous permit and represents increased cost to facilities. MDEGLE has included language that allows for reduced frequency of sampling when approved by the department.

#### *What should permitted facilities expect now that the final permit has been released?*

If a facility is currently permitted and is not able to meet the requirements of the new permit, MDEGLE has indicated that they will work with the facility to develop a timeline for facilities to come into compliance with the new permit. This will look different for every facility depending on site-specific operations and wastewater infrastructure.

#### *What resources may be available for slaughterhouses/meat processors impacted by the final general permit?*

- Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD):
  - [Food and Agriculture Investment Fund Grants](#)
  - [Rural Development Fund Grants](#)
  - [Value-Added and Regional Food System Grants](#)
- United States Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (USDA):
  - [Food Supply Chain Guaranteed Loan Program](#)
- Facilities may want to consider hiring a consultant to assist with the technical aspects of system design.
- If new permit requirements presented to you do not make sense, make sure to ask follow-up questions for written clarification to ensure you understand the conditions of your new permit.

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