



Green Mountain
Water Environment
Association

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March 28, 2016

Senator Christopher Bray
Chair, Vermont Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

REF: House Bill H. 674 – An act relating to public notice of wastewater discharges

Dear Senator Bray:

I would like to elaborate on the testimony I gave to your committee on March 23, 2016. The current bill assumes that the operator will have the technology available to issue a public alert from the site of an overflow event. There are, however, many areas in the State where there is no cell phone service. Additionally, there is the assumption that all operators carry cell phones or other communication devices at all times.

The main focus at any emergency event is to “stabilize” (i.e. to bring to a point where further damage ceases, to stop the bleeding). The main focus of the operator who discovers a wastewater overflow event is to **stop the overflow**, to bring the event to a point where further damage ceases. This bill, in its current form, can hinder that process in some situations. It is my firm belief that the countdown to issue a public alert should start at the point where the operator has done all he/she could do to stabilize the overflow event.

With that in mind, I ask that you consider the following changes:

(b) Public alert. Upon discovery of an untreated discharge from a wastewater treatment facility, An operator of a wastewater treatment facility shall, as soon as possible, but no longer than one hour from discovery of an untreated discharge from the wastewater treatment facility, post on a publicly accessible electronic network, mobile application, or other electronic media designated by the Secretary an alert informing the public of the untreated discharge and its location. The operator shall attempt to stop or minimize the damage from an ongoing overflow event prior to issuing a public alert notification. If the operator lacks the resources to issue a public alert notification from the scene of an ongoing overflow discharge, the operator shall make the public alert notification as soon as possible but not longer than one hour after leaving the overflow discharge site.

In closing, GMWEA supports the concept of public notification when there is a health concern, however, any notification needs to be realistic and address all aspects of the event.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Kenney".

Richard Kenney
Vice President, GMWEA
Chief Water System Operator, Town of Hartford, VT