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Industry Standards

The future of pollution controls and how they will affect industrial storm water treatment

As new regulations put increasing pressure on industrial storm water treatment, Storm Water Solutions Associate Editor Kate Cline spoke with Claire Tonry and Calvin Noling of StormwaterRx, a manufacturer of storm water treatment systems for industrial facilities, to discuss how regulations will affect companies.

Kate Cline: What is the biggest regulatory issue providers of industrial storm water treatment face today?

Claire Tonry: Benchmarks—pollutant concentration goals for industrial storm water discharges are a primary focus. While they are just goals, benchmarks are treated much like effluent limitations and form the basis for enforcement actions from regulators and especially private citizen lawsuits. This is an issue for technology providers because industrial storm water treatment BMPs [best management practices] typically remove a percent of pollutants, while benchmarks are expressed as concentrations. Success requires facilities to implement combinations of BMPs—each one removing a percentage of the pollutant load—to reach benchmarks.

Cline: How will the Chesapeake Total Maximum Daily Limit (TMDL) affect storm water treatment?

Calvin Noling: This and other TMDLs that identify storm water as causing or contributing to a water body's impairment will have significant bearing on storm water treatment BMP selection and implementation. Industrial sites that meet current pollutant benchmark standards without treatment may need to implement treatment or more rigorous or different BMPs to comply with TMDLs. Sites that currently use basic treatment methods may need to upgrade to enhanced or advanced treatment. TMDLs can also expand the suite of

pollutants sites must manage. Mercury, PCBs [polychlorinated biphenyls], other toxic organics and pesticides will be addressed by several future TMDLs across the nation. While existing treatment technologies can reduce these pollutants, storm water treatment technology will advance as TMDLs make them a focus of storm water regulation.

Cline: What other pending regulations or policies could affect industrial storm water treatment?

Noling: There is an emerging trend of state permits requiring specific BMPs for certain industrial sectors. These include everything from basic source controls that apply across many industries to particular BMPs (e.g., vacuum sanders for boatyard maintenance). If facilities implement these practices, they will see general pollutant reduction as well as more efficient performance from treatment devices and longer intervals between maintenance.

Tonry: More broadly, we are also seeing source control legislation in several states that will address ubiquitous pollutants that end up in storm water. Examples of this are recent bills limiting the amount of copper used in brake pads. Such laws will eventually lighten the burden on industrial sites and their treatment systems by reducing ambient pollution contributions.

Cline: How will companies have to adapt as storm water regulations change?

Noling: As storm water regulations tighten, we can expect the line between storm water technologies and wastewater technologies to blur. Companies will need to take their storm water management more seriously to meet stricter standards. Sites will need to take advantage of all of the pollutant reduction opportunities available—source control, structural solutions and treatment—whereas in the past they may have just done one or two things to manage storm water.

Unfortunately, most companies are not prepared. Financing for site improvements is one aspect that companies need to plan for in these tough economic times. The other important aspect is being informed and taking a hard look at where inexpensive facility improvements or changes in operations might be made to improve storm water quantity and quality. SWS

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