



## Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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## AFTER IMPROVEMENTS MADE AT THE WOONSOCKET WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT, DEM LIFTS NO-CONTACT ADVISORY FOR THE BLACKSTONE RIVER

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) is lifting the no-contact advisory it placed March 1 on the stretch of the Blackstone River from the Woonsocket wastewater treatment plant to the Slater Mill Dam in Pawtucket. The City of Woonsocket owns the plant but contracts its operations and maintenance out to Jacobs, a Texas-based consulting and engineering firm, and related sludge treatment systems to Synagro Technologies Inc., headquartered in Baltimore.

DEM issued the advisory – recommending that residents temporarily refrain from wading, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, or fishing and from eating any fish caught in these waters – after receiving notification that there was a solids washout at the treatment facility March 1. Since, DEM has inspected the facility five times and had multiple meetings with the city and plant operators investigating the causes that have resulted in the loss of full treatment and observing the steps being taken to ensure a return to permit compliance. As part of this effort, DEM required that the city and its vendors to increase sampling and testing, implement twice-daily reporting of the effluent clarity and solids levels in the facility's clarifiers, institute process changes, and proceed with the installation of a portable gravity belt thickener until the permanent thickener can be repaired.

These actions have improved discharge quality to the degree that the plant has been consistently meeting its effluent permit limits since March 3. DEM extended the advisory between March 3 and today because the treatment process wasn't under control. Based on this and the continued daily monitoring/reporting, DEM is lifting the no-contact advisory effective immediately.

Today, Attorney General Peter F. Neronha announced that his office and DEM have filed a civil complaint against the plant operators in Superior Court stemming from the facility's unpermitted discharges.

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