



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
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BOARD MATTER
Supervisor James N. Bierman, Jr.
July 30, 2024

Corbalis Water Treatment Plant Effluent Discharge

Background: Every five years, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) reviews Fairfax Water Authority's permit for the Corbalis Water Treatment Plant in Herndon to discharge effluents. This permit review includes the opportunity for public comment.

In recent weeks, residents living near the Corbalis Water Treatment Plant have been impacted by a strong odor due to increased algae levels in the Potomac River water that is treated at this plant. The increased algae has resulted in higher levels of organic matter removed during the water treatment process and discharged through a state-permitted outfall into a tributary of Sugarland Run. In addition to the odor, this increase in organic matter may have negative impacts on aquatic life.

Fairfax Water has ensured safe drinking water throughout this incident and Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) staff have been monitoring the situation, sharing information with Fairfax Water Authority, and exploring potential solutions to avoid a reoccurrence of the odor and impacts to Sugarland Run.

While algae levels in the Potomac River are returning to more normal levels, this situation may recur in the future due to changed rainfall patterns related to climate change.

Motion: Therefore, I move that the Board direct DPWES staff to 1) review the Fairfax Water Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, and submit comments to the Virginia DEQ if they identify opportunities for improvements to the permit that would better ensure the water quality of Sugarland Run is protected and that discharge odors do not adversely impact local residents in future algae spikes in the Potomac; and 2) continue coordinating with Fairfax Water Authority to identify ways this situation may be avoided in the future, including potentially having this effluent discharged into the County's sanitary sewer system.