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ADEQ Officials Announce New Water Quality General Permits Available for Wastewater Treatment Plants

PHOENIX – (July 23, 2012) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality officials announced today that two new streamlined water quality control permits are now available for operation of wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) that discharge effluent to surface water throughout the state.

Coverage under the general permits will be available for those WWTPs releasing less than one million gallons per day to surface waters that flow only after rain or snow events, or to those surface waters that are dependent upon effluent discharges for their flow. Coverage will also be available for those WWTPs releasing less than 20 million gallons per day on a very infrequent or emergency-only basis.

Discharges to continuous and intermittent flowing surface water bodies that have been designated as “Outstanding Arizona Waters” due to their exceptional recreational or ecological significance are not eligible to discharge under these general permits.

A general permit is a cost-effective and efficient way for ADEQ to authorize discharges from a large number of similar facilities, while ensuring consistency in permit conditions for similar discharges. General permits also benefit an applicant by significantly reducing the cost and shortening the time necessary to obtain permit coverage. Individual permits previously costing as much as \$15,000 and taking up to a year to issue will now be available as general permits costing between \$1,500 and \$2,500 and be issued in much less time

Further, as general permits are developed to restrict discharges at multiple facilities, the requirements are often more stringent than what would be required under an individual permit. Thus, cost and time savings do not come at the expense of environmental protection.

“We are continuously looking for ways to reduce permit processing times while maintaining the same or higher level of environmental protection,” said ADEQ Director Henry Darwin. “It generally takes a wastewater treatment plant from nine to 12 months to receive an individual permit. These new general permits will only take four to six months to process and will offer the same or better water quality protection due to the comprehensive monitoring required.”

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Wastewater treatment plants already operating under individual permits may be eligible for one of the new general permits at the time of renewal if the requirements for coverage can be met. The applications for the new general permits are available online at <http://www.azdeq.gov/environ/water/permits/gen.html>

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