

# Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

## Interoffice Memorandum

**To:** Commissioners **Date:** April 24, 2015

**Thru:** Bridget C. Bohac, Chief Clerk  
Richard A. Hyde, P.E., Executive Director

**From:** Caroline M. Sweeney, Deputy Director  
Office of Legal Services

**Docket No.:** 2015-0249-RUL

**Subject:** Commission Approval for Proposed Rulemaking  
Chapter 317, Design Criteria Prior to 2008  
Re-adoption of 30 TAC 317: Sewage Systems  
Rule Project No. 2013-025-317-LS

### **Background and reason(s) for the rulemaking:**

Effective August 28, 2008, 30 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 317 was repealed and replaced with the adoption of 30 TAC Chapter 217, Design Criteria for Domestic Wastewater Systems (Rule Project No. 2006-044-217-PR). The repeal of Chapter 317 created regulatory uncertainty for the owners and operators of those existing wastewater collection and treatment facilities not subject to Chapter 217 requirements. Chapter 217 applies to facilities constructed or renovated after its adoption, but does not otherwise apply to existing facilities. Although those existing facilities are subject to permit requirements, because Chapter 317 was repealed and no savings clause was included in Chapter 217 to address existing facilities, it has been unclear under what regulations those permitted existing facilities should operate and the basis for applying those regulations.

Because many of the rule requirements and even the former name of Chapter 317 state "Design Criteria," there has also been uncertainty regarding whether or not a facility must also be constructed or installed, maintained, and operated in compliance with the rule requirements.

### **Scope of the rulemaking:**

It has never been the commission's intent that any facility be subject to no regulation. Accordingly, the Executive Director (ED) initiated this rulemaking to "re-adopt" Chapter 317 as the most expeditious means to address this uncertainty, and amend the applicability section to clarify which facilities are subject to Chapter 317, and to clarify the commission's initial and ongoing position that facilities must be installed, operated, and maintained in accordance with the approved specifications, plans, and design criteria of Chapter 317.

The proposed rulemaking will clarify the commission's requirements, thereby simplifying the regulated community's efforts to comply, while maintaining the commission's duty to protect human health and the environment.

### **A.) Summary of what the rulemaking will do:**

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Proposed new Chapter 317 would address regulatory uncertainty caused by the 2008 repealing of Chapter 317 and clarify the ongoing intent that those facilities originally governed by Chapter 317 continuously comply with the Chapter 317 standards during installation/construction, operation and maintenance.

**B.) Scope required by federal regulations or state statutes:**

None.

**C.) Additional staff recommendations that are not required by federal rule or state statute:**

None.

**Statutory authority:**

Texas Water Code (TWC), §5.013, General Jurisdiction of Commission; TWC, §5.103, Rules; TWC, §5.105, General Policy; TWC, §5.120, Conservation and Quality of Environment; TWC, §26.027, Commission May Issue Permits; TWC, §26.034, Approval of Disposal System Plans; and TWC, §26.121, Unauthorized Discharges Prohibited.

**Effect on the:**

**A.) Regulated community:**

The proposed rules clarify regulatory uncertainty as to applicable requirements but do not introduce a new regulatory burden. There is no fiscal impact to the regulated community.

**B.) Public:**

The public will benefit from improved compliance. There is no fiscal impact to the public.

**C.) Agency programs:**

Agency permitting and enforcement programs will benefit from improved compliance. There is no fiscal impact to agency programs.

**Stakeholder meetings:**

There were no stakeholder meetings planned for this rulemaking; however, a public hearing on this matter will be held on June 23, 2015, to coincide with the public hearing for the Chapter 217 proposed rulemaking project (Rule Project No. 2012-040-217-OW).

**Potential controversial concerns and legislative interest:**

There are no controversial issues or legislative interest.

**Will this rulemaking affect any current policies or require development of new policies?**

Because the existing policies were predicated on the agency's intent that no facilities be unregulated and that the criteria in the rules apply to facility design, installation/construction, operation, and maintenance, no new policies are necessary.

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**What are the consequences if this rulemaking does not go forward? Are there alternatives to rulemaking?**

If the rulemaking does not go forward, the regulatory uncertainty and confusion regarding agency intent will remain, with that uncertainty and confusion eventually addressed by the court system.

**Key points in the proposal rulemaking schedule:**

**Anticipated proposal date:** May 13, 2015

**Anticipated *Texas Register* publication date:** May 29, 2015

**Anticipated public hearing date:** June 23, 2015

**Anticipated public comment period:** May 29-June 29, 2015

**Anticipated adoption date:** November 4, 2015

**Agency contacts:**

Tammy Mitchell, Rule Project Manager, (512) 239-0736, Litigation Division

Kathy Humphreys, Staff Attorney, (512) 239-3417

Derek Baxter, Texas Register Coordinator, (512) 239-2613

**Attachments**

None.

cc: Chief Clerk, 2 copies  
Executive Director's Office  
Marshall Coover  
Pattie Burnett  
Stephen Tatum  
Office of General Counsel  
Tammy Mitchell  
Derek Baxter