

**TCEQ DOCKET NO. 2024-1260-MWD
TPDES PERMIT WQ0015850001**

**APPLICATION BY
PRAIRIE CROSSING
WASTEWATER LLC
FOR TPDES PERMIT
NO. WQ0015850001**

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**BEFORE THE TEXAS
COMMISSION ON
ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY**

**TAYLOR MEADOWS 712, LP
REPLY TO RESPONSES TO
HEARING REQUESTS
AND REQUESTS FOR RECONSIDERATION**

TO THE HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS:

COMES NOW, the Taylor Meadows 712, LP (“Landowner”) and files this Reply to Hearing Requests and Requests for Reconsideration, and would respectfully show as follows:

The Responses assert that Taylor Meadows’s pleading should be rejected because Taylor Meadows “must be based only on the requestor’s timely comments.” 30 Tex. Admin. Code § 55.201(c). See also 30 Tex. Admin. Code § 55.201(d)(4)(B). While this requirement applies to Hearing Requests, it does not apply to Requests for Reconsideration. Requests for Reconsideration are governed by 30 Tex. Admin. Code § 55.201(a), (e)-(g). Those provisions do not limit requesters to only those who filed timely comments during the comment period. In fact, 30 Tex. Admin. Code § 55.201(a), states that a request for reconsideration must be filed no later than 30 days after the chief clerk mails (or otherwise transmits) the executive director's decision and response to comments and provides instructions for requesting that the commission reconsider the executive director's decision or hold a contested case hearing. The Request for Reconsideration was timely filed in this case.

The Responses also complain about the error made by the attorney for the Requestor, which error was fixed by the filing of a First Amended Request. It is well established that the parties’

pleadings speak for themselves and amended pleadings wholly replace the assertions made in prior pleadings. *Elliott v. Methodist Hosp.*, 54 S.W.3d 789, 793 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 2001, pet. denied) (Generally, “[a] plaintiff’s timely filed amended pleading supersedes all previous pleadings and becomes the controlling petition in the case regarding theories of recovery”); *see also Bos v. Smith*, 556 S.W.3d 293, 306 (Tex. 2018) (Amended pleadings supersede prior pleadings).

By amending its Request, Landowner, effectively replaced the original pleading, but the original pleading date is not disregarded. *See Tex. Disposal Sys. Landfill, Inc. v. Waste Mgmt. Holdings, Inc.*, 219 S.W.3d 563, 587 (Tex. App.—Austin 2007, pet. denied) (“Under the relation-back doctrine, an original pleading tolls the statute of limitations for claims asserted in subsequent, amended pleadings as long as the amendments are not based on new, distinct, or different transactions or occurrences”).

In sum, the Amended Pleading, not the pleading that inadvertently named 05 Ranch Investments, Inc., should be the Pleading that is considered by the Commission.

This case presents a unique situation where the Applicant has complained about deficiencies in a permit application for a WWTP that is close by (Cielo Ranch WWTP) (TPDES Permit No. WQ0016146001), but the Applicant’s permit application contains the same deficiencies. In other words, by asserting deficiencies in the Cielo Ranch WWTP, when those deficiencies also exist in its permit application, Applicant **admits** that its application is deficient in the following ways:

1. In their request for a contested case hearing for the Cielo Ranch permit, the Prairie Crossing MUDs assert that “the appropriate antidegradation analysis to determine [that there will not be an impairment of water quality greater than a *deminimis* amount] has not been

included in the permit application.” See Exhibit A at page 4. For applications for new/amended discharges, the TCEQ Standards Team performs an antidegradation analysis of the proposed discharge, and per 30 TAC § 307.5 (TSWQS) and the TCEQ’s IPs, an antidegradation review of the receiving waters is performed that includes nutrient screenings. The antidegradation analysis is conducted by the Agency. It is not part of the application. If the Prairie Crossing MUDs are correct, however, that the application must include this analysis, then this application (which applies to the service area for the Prairie Crossing MUDs is also found wanting and the permit should not be granted without a contested case hearing. The question of whether this permit complies with TCEQ’s antidegradation policy was raised during the comment period and addressed in the Response to Comments (Response No. 6). The Executive Director, however, did not address the issue of whether, as alleged by the Prairie Crossing MUDs, that the antidegradation review must be included in the application. In this case, the antidegradation review was not included in the application. The permit, therefore, should be referred for a contested case hearing or the Agency should reconsider its decision and reject the permit.

2. In their request for a contested case hearing for the Cielo Ranch permit, the Prairie Crossing MUDs assert that the failure to include a noise and odor abatement plan in the application should result in the denial of the permit. Exhibit A at 4. In this case, no noise and odor abatement plan was included in the application. The permit, therefore, should be referred for a contested case hearing or the Agency should reconsider its decision and reject the permit.

Landowner is an affected person in this case. Landowner owns land that is immediately

adjacent to the development that will be built under the jurisdiction of Prairie Crossing Municipal Utility Districts. Landowner's property is less than one mile west of the wastewater plant and the discharge point. To the extent that Applicant has not adequately addressed a noise and odor abatement plan, Landowner is affected differently from members of the general public because it will affect the use of enjoyment of the Landowner's property. Furthermore, the receiving stream for the discharge (Boggy Creek) runs through Landowner's land. To the extent that this Applicant fails to comply with antidegradation requirements for Boggy Creek, Landowner will be prevented from utilizing the stream for its own uses. This also is an interest protected under the law the is different from members of the general public.

Finally, Landowner asked to be placed on the mailing list for the Applicant's permit by having through its representatives David Tuckfield, Kamalakar Poonuru, and Vijay Kasireddy placed on the mailing list, yet these individuals did not receive any correspondence regarding the Applicant's permit after having asked to be placed on the mailing list.

Respectfully submitted,

THE AL LAW GROUP, PLLC

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 16th day of September 2024 a true and correct copy of the foregoing document was filed with the Office of the Chief Clerk and was served on the following by email (where indicated) and first-class mail (where indicated) as follows:

FOR THE APPLICANT via electronic mail and first class mail:

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/s/ David J. Tuckfield

EXHIBIT A

April 7, 2023

Ms. Laurie Gharis
Office of the Chief Clerk, MC 105
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
PO Box 13087
Austin, Texas 78711-3087

**VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL
AND ELECTRONIC FILING**

RE: Public Comments, Request for Public Meeting, and Hearing Request for
Application for Proposed TPDES Permit No. WQ0016146001
Applicant: Wilco MUD 45 WWTP LLC
Site Name: Cielo Ranch WWTP

Dear Ms. Gharis:

We hereby submit this letter on behalf of Prairie Crossing Municipal Utility Districts 1 & 2 ("Prairie Crossing MUDs") to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality ("TCEQ"), providing formal public comments and requesting a public meeting and a contested case hearing regarding the above-referenced application ("Application") of Wilco MUD 45 WWTP LLC ("Wilco MUD" or the "Applicant") for a new Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System ("TPDES") permit, and the proposed draft permit for such Application ("Draft Permit"). These comments are timely filed.

Please include me on the TCEQ's mailing list for all filings in the above-referenced Application. My mailing/contact information as follows:

Mr. Nathan E. Vassar
Lloyd Gosselink Rochelle & Townsend, P.C.
816 Congress Avenue, Suite 1900
Austin, Texas 78701
Phone: 512-322-5867
Fax: 512-472-0532

I. BACKGROUND

The Prairie Crossing MUDs are political subdivisions of the State of Texas authorized by the TCEQ to provide services within an area of Williamson County. Prairie Crossing Wastewater, LLC ("Prairie Crossing") is the holder of existing TPDES Permit No. WQ0015850001 (the "PC Permit") which authorizes the building of a wastewater treatment plant within the area of the Prairie Crossing MUDs. The PC Permit authorizes Prairie Crossing to treat and discharge wastewater from the Prairie Crossing Wastewater Treatment Facility located approximately one mile northeast of the intersection of County Road 485 and Farm-to-Market Road 9, in Williamson County, Texas. Its discharge route runs via pipe to Boggy Creek, then to Brushy Creek in Segment No. 1244 of the Brazos River Basin. The PC Permit allows for a daily average flow of effluent not

to exceed 0.990 MGD. On January 6, 2023, Prairie Crossing submitted an application for an Amendment to the PC Permit to expand its capacity in order to have greater ability to provide regional wastewater treatment service.

The Applicant originally applied to TCEQ for proposed TPDES Permit No. WQ0016146001 to authorize the discharge of treated wastewater at a volume not to exceed an annual average flow of 3,000,000 gallons per day from the Cielo Ranch Wastewater Treatment Plant (“CRWWTP”). The TCEQ received the application on April 11, 2022. On March 17, 2023, a combined Noticed of Receipt of Application and Intent to Obtain a Water Quality Permit and Notice of Application and Preliminary Decision for TPDES Permit for Municipal Wastewater was issued to correct the annual average flow authorization to a volume not to exceed an annual average flow of 2,000,000 gallons per day from CRWWTP. The proposed CRWWTP will be located approximately 1.56 miles southeast of the intersection of Farm-to-Market Road 3349 and County Road 404, in Williamson County, Texas. The discharge route will be from the CRWWTP site to Boggy Creek; thence to Brushy Creek. As noted below, the Applicant’s proposed discharge is less than two miles from Prairie Crossing’s permitted outfall.

As the political subdivisions of the State of Texas authorized by the TCEQ to provide wastewater services within an area of Williamson County, the Prairie Crossing MUDs adopt Prairie Crossing’s concerns submitted separately and restated below in regard to proposed TPDES Permit No. WQ0016146001. Below are Prairie Crossing MUDs’ timely filed public comments raising significant disputed issues of fact that are relevant and material to the TCEQ’s decision on the Application and represent the basis for Prairie Crossing MUDs’ request for a public meeting and a contested case hearing, should the Application not be remanded back to technical review and/or denied.

Prairie Crossing MUDs request that the TCEQ deny the Application and corresponding Draft Permit because it fails to: (1) meet the TCEQ’s regionalization policy; (2) satisfy water quality and antidegradation standards; and (3) include all of the information required in TCEQ application forms. Accordingly, Prairie Crossing MUDs hereby request a contested case hearing.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

As provided in further detail below, Prairie Crossing MUDs assert that the Application and Draft Permit should be denied because: (1) the Application does not meet applicable statutory and regulatory requirements for a TPDES permit application; (2) the Draft Permit fails to meet the requirements of Texas Water Code, Chapter 26; (3) fails to meet the TCEQ’s regionalization policy for wastewater treatment plants; and (4) fails to adequately protect against CRWWTP’s probable negative impacts on water quality and comply with TCEQ antidegradation policy.

A. The Application fails to comply with the State’s Regionalization Policy

The statutory State Regionalization Policy exists to “encourage and promote the development and use of regional and area-wide waste collection, treatment, and disposal systems

to serve the waste disposal needs of citizens of the state and to prevent pollution and maintain and enhance the quality of the water in the state.”¹ In order to implement this Policy, Section 1.B of the TCEQ’s TPDES permit application form (Domestic Technical Report 1.1) contains three questions related to the potential for regionalization of wastewater treatment plants, tailored to the identification of permitted nearby wastewater treatment facilities and/or collection systems that could provide service to the service area proposed in the TPDES permit application.² The third regionalization question in Section 1.B is relevant to Wilco MUD’s Application, and Wilco MUD has failed to complete the regionalization analysis and process.

Specifically, Section 1.B.3 concerns the existence of *permitted* domestic wastewater treatment plants or sanitary sewer collection systems located within a three-mile radius of the proposed wastewater treatment facility.³ If such permittees exist, then the applicant is required to identify them, and provide supporting documentation, regarding any such neighboring utilities’ responses to mandatory correspondence from the applicant regarding wastewater service for the proposed service area.⁴ The applicant must provide a justification for the proposed facility and a comparison of the costs to construct it against those to connect to the applicable existing facility.⁵ In its Application, Wilco MUD indicated that no such permitted facilities which “have the capacity to accept or are willing to expand to accept the volume of wastewater proposed” are located within three miles. This statement is incorrect, as Prairie Crossing’s permitted facility is to be located less than two miles from the CRWWTP site. As such, Wilco MUD should have provided the mandatory notification to Prairie Crossing regarding their need for wastewater service in the area. This notification was not provided and at no point has Prairie Crossing stated it was not willing or able to provide service to meet projected needs, nor did Prairie Crossing ever consent to Wilco MUD constructing its own separate wastewater treatment plant. Prairie Crossing’s ability to provide service is further evidenced by its own Amendment, submitted on January 6, 2023, to expand its capacity in order to provide regional wastewater treatment service, including for the area covered pursuant to the Application. Because this Application cannot meet the standard required by Section 1.B.3 and is contrary to TCEQ regionalization policy, the Application and corresponding Draft Permit should be denied.

B. The Application raises concerns that the proposed discharge will not be in compliance with the TCEQ’s antidegradation policy.

As stated above, the Application proposes the discharge of treated domestic wastewater from the proposed CRWWTP to Boggy Creek, thence to the classified segment of Brushy Creek (Segment ID 1244). A review of this discharge route reveals two ponds: Pond #1, about 2,000 ft from the proposed outfall, and Pond #2, about 1 mile downstream from the proposed outfall. It is likely that the discharge of treated domestic wastewater will impair water quality in these ponds greater than a *de minimus* amount and cause dissolved oxygen levels

¹ Tex. Water Code § 26.081-.087.

² Application for a Domestic Wastewater Permit Technical Report 1.1 at 21-22.

³ Domestic Technical Report 1.1 at 22.

⁴ Domestic Technical Report 1.1 at 22.

⁵ Domestic Technical Report 1.1 at 22.

to fall below minimum levels to sustain aquatic life due to the proposed CRWWTP's organic loading from BOD, TSS, ammonia-nitrogen, and phosphorus,⁶ but the appropriate antidegradation analysis to determine this outcome has not been included in the permit application. Without this analysis, the Application cannot demonstrate that the two ponds-Pond can sustain aquatic life as effluent dominated ponds without eutrophication. To meet TCEQ antidegradation policy, such analysis should be required. Because the Application, as proposed, is not in compliance with the TCEQ's antidegradation policy, the Application and corresponding Draft Permit should be denied.

C. The Application contains a number of additional deficiencies.

After a careful review of the Application, Prairie Crossing MUDs believe that the Application contains the following additional deficiencies, and that due to these deficiencies, the Application and corresponding Draft Permit should be denied:

- 1. Nuisance Odors.** A noise and odor abatement plan has not been prepared. An additional, unneeded treatment and disposal facility, if not operated properly, may result in nuisance odors that will adversely affect the quality of life of nearby residents and the public. In accordance with 30 TAC § 309.13(e), the Applicant must demonstrate that sufficient measures to prevent nuisance odors will be undertaken at the proposed CRWWTP. It is not in the public interest to issue a new discharge authorization that may result in nuisance odors when regionalized wastewater services are available.
- 2. Description of Immediate Receiving Waters.** Section 4 of Domestic Technical Report Worksheet 2.0 requires the applicant to identify the appropriate description of the receiving waters.⁷ The information listed by Wilco MUD under this section is incomplete as it does not identify two existing ponds downstream of the proposed outfall. Moreover, it fails to identify that in previous drought conditions, Pond #1 ran dry and Pond #2 decreased in size. As noted, the existing ponds may drive water quality impairments.
- 3. Description of Stream Physical Characteristics.** Domestic Worksheet 2.1 requires a description of general characteristics of the waterbody, including stream physical characteristics. This worksheet was not included in the Application. It is required by the TCEQ for a new discharge permit application, including the associated discharge route map where creek cross sections were taken for a minimum of one-half of a mile downstream from the proposed outfall locations. Wilco MUD should be required to perform field work to collect and submit this data to the TCEQ.

⁶ Application for a Domestic Wastewater Permit Administrative Report 1.0 at 9.

⁷ Application for a Domestic Wastewater Permit Technical Report Worksheet 2.0 at 29-31.

4. **Buffer Zone.** Section 3 of Domestic Administrative Report 1.1 requires a TPDES permit applicant to show how the buffer zone requirements of 30 TAC § 309.13(e) will be met.⁸ The instructions further specify that “[t]he buffer zone, either 150 or 500 feet from the treatment units, . . . can be met by ownership, legal restrictions preventing residential structures within the buffer zone, an approved nuisance odor prevention plan, or variance to the buffer zone.”⁹ The map provided by Wilco MUD in Attachment B to the Application is unclear and does not show that these buffer zone requirements have been met.¹⁰ Additionally, the easement documents provided by Wilco MUD in Attachment B do not show that legal restrictions preventing residential structures within the buffer zone are in place.¹¹

III. REQUEST FOR PUBLIC MEETING

Prairie Crossing MUDs request a public meeting regarding the Application in light of the issues raised in this letter. The TCEQ’s regulations in 30 TAC § 55.154(c) provide that “[a]t any time, the executive director or the Office of the Chief Clerk may hold a public meeting,” and that “[t]he executive director or the Office of the Chief Clerk shall hold a public meeting if: (1) the executive director determines that there is a substantial or significant degree of public interest in an application.” Pursuant to 30 TAC § 55.150, this opportunity to request a public meeting under 30 TAC § 55.154(c) applies to applications for a new TPDES permit, such as the Application. Accordingly, Prairie Crossing MUDs, as political subdivisions of the State of Texas authorized by the TCEQ to provide services within an area of Williamson County, have a substantial and significant degree of public interest in the Application. Prairie Crossing MUDs are willing to work with the TCEQ and Wilco MUD to determine a location for such a public meeting.

IV. REQUEST FOR CONTESTED CASE HEARING

Prairie Crossing MUDs also request a contested case hearing regarding the Application and each and every issue raised in Prairie Crossing MUDs’ public comments, and any and all supplements and/or amendments thereto. For the reasons set forth herein, Prairie Crossing MUDs are affected persons, as defined by 30 TAC § 55.203. Prairie Crossing MUDs have a personal justiciable interest to a legal right, duty privilege, power or economic interest that is not common to the general public that would be adversely affected should the Application be approved. In determining whether a person is an affected person, the TCEQ may consider, among other factors, “(1) whether the interest claimed is one protected by the law under which the Application will be considered; (2) distance restrictions or other limitations imposed by law on the affected interest; (3) whether a reasonable relationship exists between the interest claimed and the activity regulated; (4) the likely impact of the regulated activity on the health, safety, and use of property of the person; (5) the likely impact of the regulated activity on use of the impacted natural

⁸ Application for a Domestic Wastewater Permit Administrative Report 1.1 at 15.

⁹ Instructions for Completing Domestic Wastewater Permit Applications at 46.

¹⁰ Application Attachment B.

¹¹ Application Attachment B.

resource by the person; (6) whether the requestor submitted comments on the Application that were not withdrawn; and, (7) for governmental entities, their statutory authority over or interest in the issues relevant to the Application.” The TCEQ may also consider “the merits of the underlying application and supporting documentation . . . , including whether the application meets the requirements for permit issuance.” Prairie Crossing MUDs are affected persons, as defined by 30 Tex. Admin. Code § 55.103 and 55.203 and the Application is serviceable within the area Prairie Crossing MUDs provide services within Williamson County. Prairie Crossing MUDs contend the Application is contrary to TCEQ regionalization policy for the reasons outlined above. Additionally, Prairie Crossing MUDs contend that Wilco MUD’s failure to provide an adequate noise and odor abatement plan, failure to adequately assess stream quality and characteristics, and failure to meet TCEQ’s buffer zone requirements likely will adversely affect the quality of life of nearby residents and the public.

V. CONCLUSION

Prairie Crossing MUDs reserve the right to supplement these public comments and this request for a contested case hearing as they learn more about the Application and corresponding Draft Permit—additional information may become apparent through a public meeting (and thereby-extended comment period) regarding this Application. Prairie Crossing MUDs appreciate your consideration of these public comments and its requests for a public meeting and contested case hearing.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. If you or your staff have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nathan E. Vassar".

Nathan E. Vassar

NEV/yw

cc: (via electronic mail only)
Mr. Matt Tiemann, Tiemann Land and Cattle Development, Inc
Mr. Darren Strozewski, DCS Engineering
Ms. Michaela Dietrick, Tiemann Land and Cattle Development, Inc.