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Sewer System Overflows: Environmental Integrity Project Report Addresses Baltimore Compliance with Federal/Maryland Clean Water Act Consent Decree

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The Environmental Integrity Project ("EIP") issued a December 15th report addressing Baltimore, Maryland's progress in complying with a Consent Decree it executed with the United States Department of Justice and Maryland Department of the Environment in 2002 addressing violations of the Clean Water Act.

The EIP report is titled *Stopping the Flood Beneath Baltimore's Street* ("Report").

The Consent Decree addressed Clean Water Act violations involving sewage overflows and discharge of untreated sewage from the city's collection system to various waterbodies. Baltimore has to collect, treat and dispose of approximately 250 million gallons daily of wastewater flow.

Many communities in Arkansas are addressing similar issues on a smaller scale.

The Consent Decree requires that the city undertake hundreds of millions of dollars in additional maintenance and improvement of the sewage collection system according to a set schedule.

The *Report* identifies EIP's post Consent Decree concerns regarding the operation of the sewage system such as:

- Continued piping of raw sewage into waterbodies
- Receipt of 413 claims from homeowners regarding damage to their properties from sewage overflows from July 1, 2012 to July 1, 2015
- Levels of fecal bacteria in the city's Inner Harbor due to frequent sewage overflows that render unsafe limited-contact recreation for a significant period of time
- Under-reporting of the volume of sewage released by the system
- Reporting of some sewage overflow incidents to the state environmental agencies public database as zero in terms of volume

The *Report* also addresses Consent Decree's deadline of elimination of overflows and spills by January 1, 2016. It states that the city is only about 50% finished with the needed repair work to address this requirement.

The *Report* makes a number of recommendations in regards to the issues required to be addressed by the Consent Decree. For example, EIP states that if the United States Department of Justice and the Maryland state agency agree to an extension it should be limited to January 1, 2020.

The *Report* also states that the “two remaining sewage outfalls on the Jones Fall are used to relief pressure” should be closed. Also addressed are reporting of the referenced discharges to the public and news media and a firm deadline for completion of a hydraulic restriction project before the two sewage outfalls can be closed.

[Click here to download a copy of the *Report*.](#)