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MEDIA RELEASE

City of Phenix City Addresses Chattahoochee Riverkeeper’s Notice of Intent to Sue

Phenix City, Alabama – July 18, 2024 – The City of Phenix City is addressing the receipt of a notice of intent to sue letter sent by the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (CRK) and social media posts by the organization regarding what it describes as unpermitted discharges from the City’s wastewater treatment facility.

Recently, on June 7, 2024, the City responded to the organization’s social media posts regarding elevated E. coli levels recorded near the facility’s outfall. In its release, the City explained that the cause of the elevated measurements is an ongoing construction project at the plant that requires that certain treatment processes be taken offline for various periods of time reducing the effectiveness of the treatment process. Specifically, the City stated:

1. That the Phenix City Wastewater Treatment Plant is staffed with experienced operators certified by the State of Alabama and that the department is headed by a professional utilities engineer with nearly two decades of experience in utilities engineering and operations.

2. In 2012 the City’s facility received a \$3.6 million dollar upgrade, another \$3.2 million dollar upgrade in 2017, and since 2022, has received more than \$15 million dollars worth of upgrades and improvements to include:

- New electrical controls;
- New grit system piping and pumps;
- New aeration basins;
- The installation of a new screw pump;
- The installation of additional secondary clarifiers;
- Grit removal system is being upgrade;
- The installation of grinding equipment for the reduction of solids; and
- A complete reconstruction of the distribution arms of four large trickling filters.

Some, but not all of these improvements can readily be seen in these aerial images taken less than two years apart.

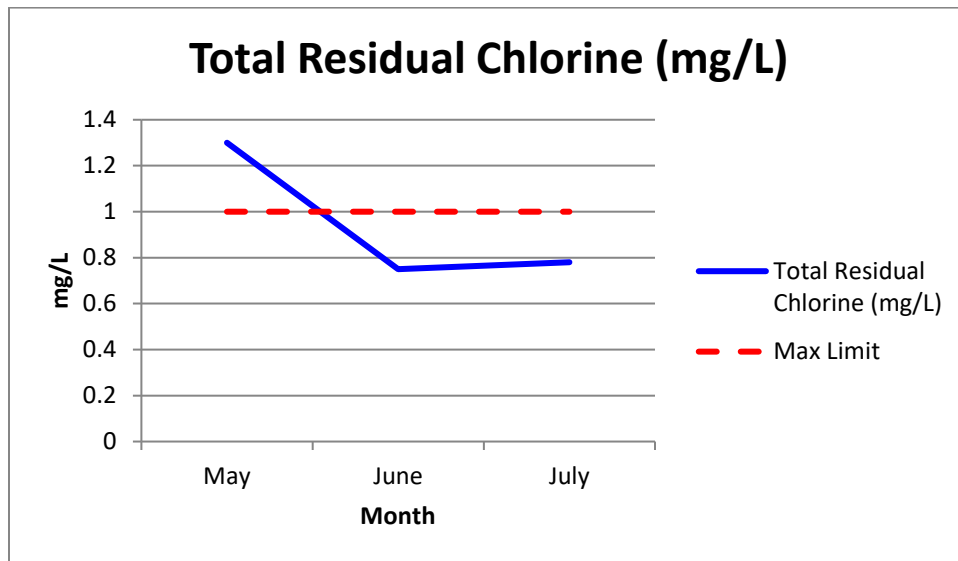


3. Currently, construction continues and the facility's four primary clarifiers are undergoing a complete and total overhaul. The timeline of the project's completion is totally dependent upon the components' manufacturer and any challenges it may face regarding supply chain issues. The components have been ordered and the funds have been allocated for payment upon delivery.

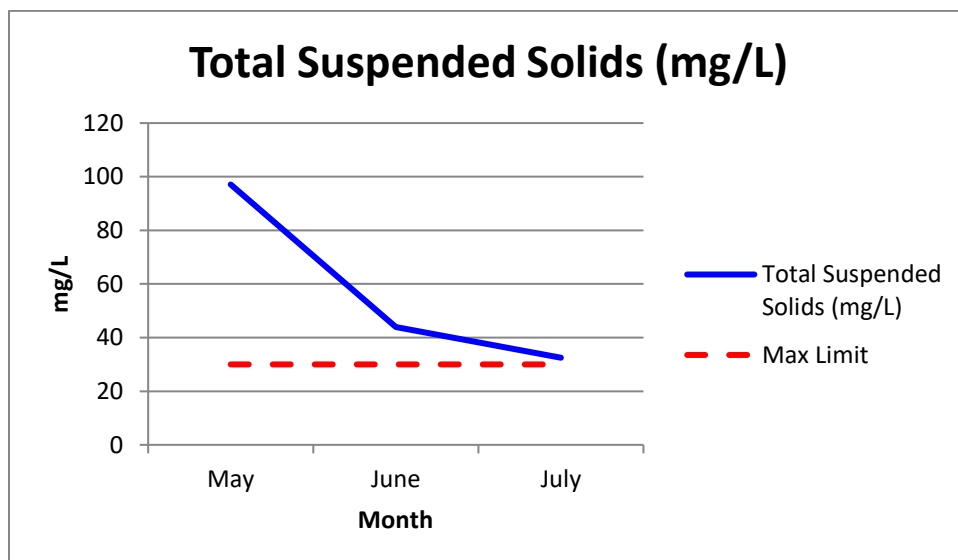
4. In June, the City stated that it "believes that the reactivation of the four trickling filters will bring the facility into compliance regarding permitted ammonia and E. coli levels within the next thirty to forty-five days." The City is pleased to announce that since the reactivation of the four trickling filters there has been significant improvement in the measurements cited by CRK.

Since June 1, 2024:

- Total Residual Chlorine has been reduced by 40% and is in compliance with ADEM's acceptable limit.

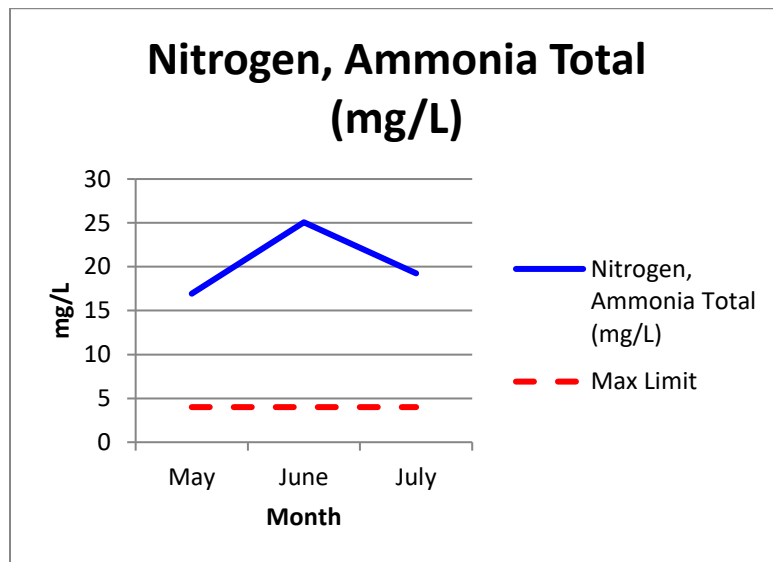


- Total Suspended Solids have been reduced by 66% and is now very close to compliance.

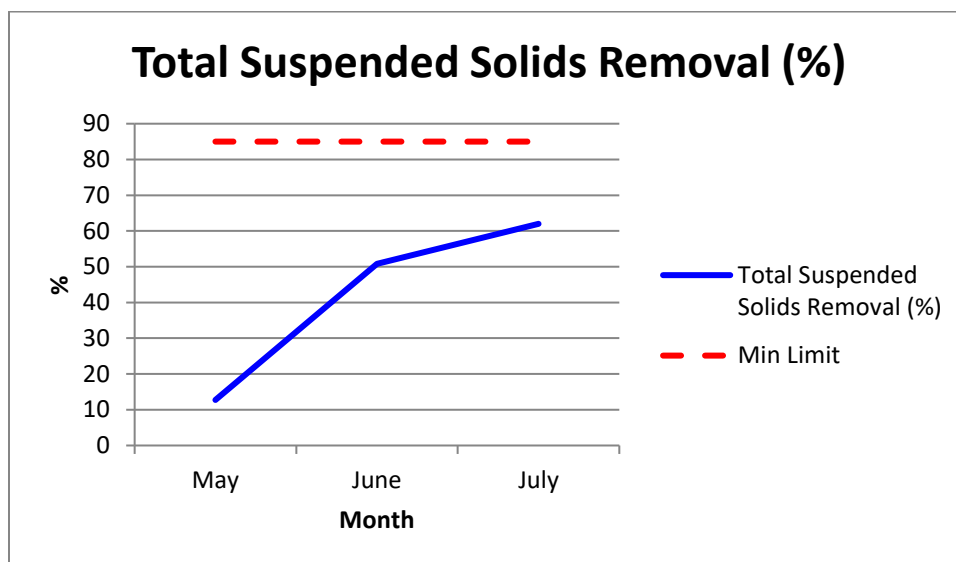




- Ammonia levels have remained nearly constant and the levels are anticipated to drop significantly when the primary clarifiers are back in service.

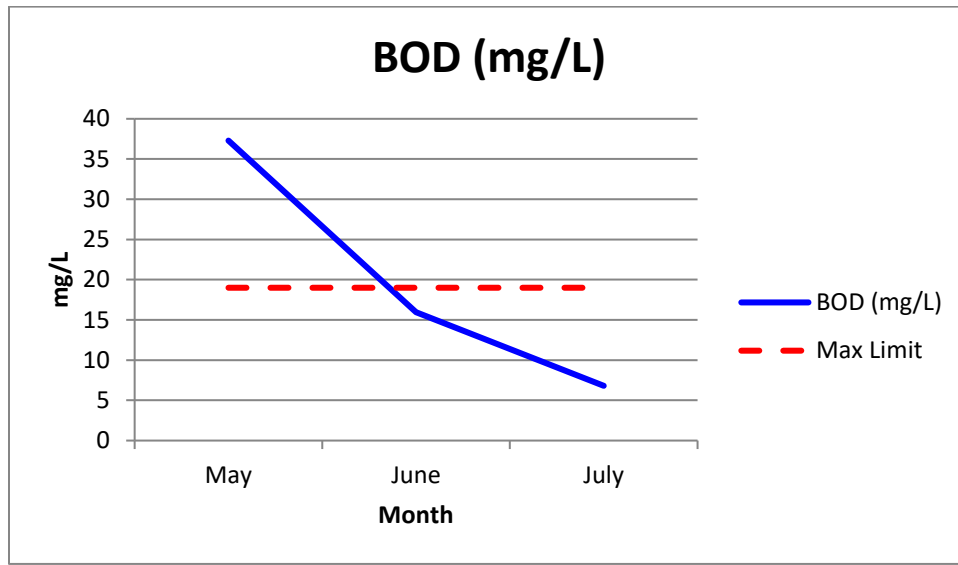


- The percentage of total suspended solids removed has increased by 49% and close to compliance.

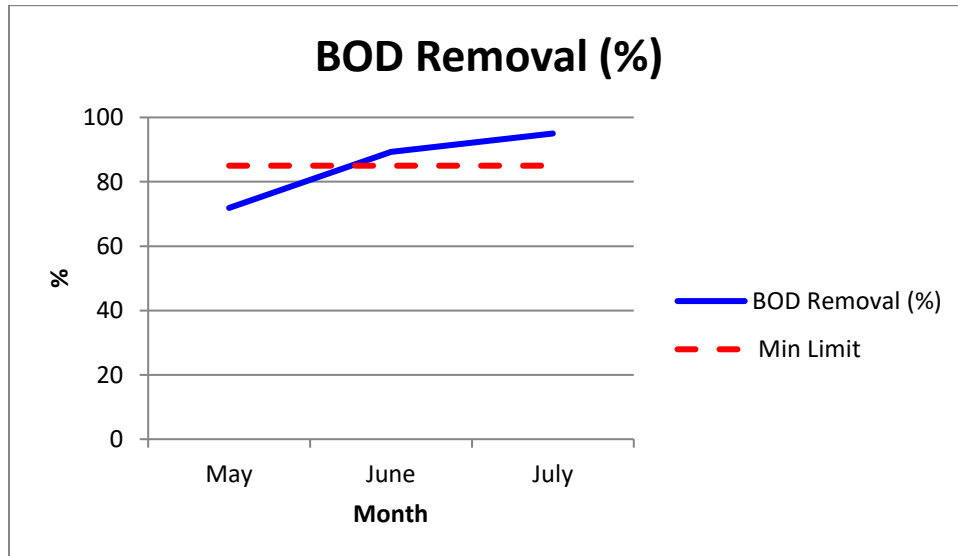




- C-BOD or carbonaceous biochemical oxygen demand has been reduced by 82% and is in compliance with ADEM's acceptable limit.

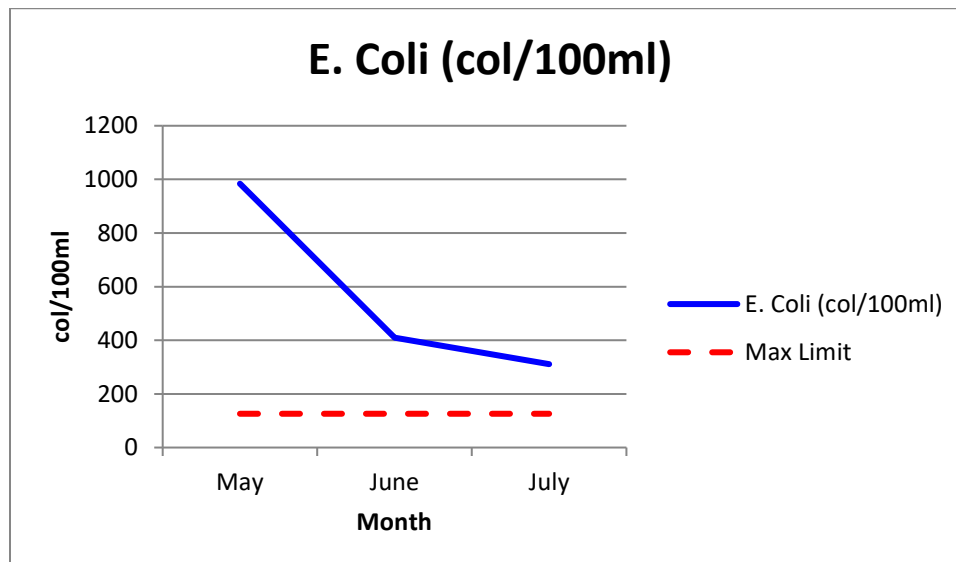


- C-BOD removal has improved by 32% and is in compliance with ADEM's acceptable limit.





- E. coli. has been reduced by 68% and is nearing compliance with ADEM’s acceptable limit.



These figures were calculated by comparing levels reported in the facility’s May DMR and testing results through July 17, 2024.

5. Significant investments have been made in studies to identify areas where groundwater and/or rain water infiltrate the collection system, which will drastically improve the facility's ability to treat wastewater entering the facility when remediation work identified by the studies is performed to eliminate the sources of groundwater and/or rain water.

Again, the City appreciates the vigilance of organizations like CRK and the cooperation of our community as we work to address this important issue. The City is committed to the continued improvement of its wastewater collection and treatment systems, and remains dedicated to maintaining the integrity of our natural resources and ensuring a safe and healthy environment for all residents.

The City believes that it will continue to realize significant improvements in the effectiveness of its wastewater treatment facility and that it will be in full compliance with all ADEM requirements soon after the completion of the ongoing upgrade project.



For media inquiries, please contact:

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