



Sanitary Sewer Modified Consent Decree Program



CITY OF BALTIMORE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

2025 MCD Annual Session Q&A

Baltimore City's Sanitary Sewer Modified Consent Decree (MCD) Annual Public Information Session was held on Thursday, January 30, 2025, at the Cylburn Arboretum Vollmer Center, located at 4915 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland.

The general session was opened by the Director of the Baltimore City Department of Public Works, Khalil Zaied. Following his remarks, Paul Sayan, Deputy Bureau Head for Water and Wastewater, presented the MCD for the Sanitary Sewer System and the City's significant progress over the past 12 months.

Following the presentation, there was a live Q&A session in which questions were taken from the meeting attendees and answered by DPW staff. These questions were first submitted in writing. Then, during the Q&A session, along with addressing the previously submitted questions and questions submitted through the meeting's live stream, attendees had the opportunity to ask additional questions live using a microphone in the room.

After the Q&A session, meeting attendees were encouraged to visit the various learning stations around the meeting room, where they engaged directly with subject matter experts from key departments within Baltimore City DPW. The learning stations detailed the primary activities of the MCD and the City's yearly progress. Community members were encouraged to submit comments and ask questions of the DPW team in the following ways:

- In-person live Q&A;
- In-person at each learning station;
- Via written question forms and comment forms to be submitted at the meeting or
- By submitting a comment form within the online virtual meeting room

Below is a summary of questions and comments received at each learning station.

IN-PERSON LIVE QUESTIONS

Q: What needs to be done to take care of sewage and sewer backups?

A: Rainfall and saturated ground can infiltrate the City's wastewater collection system during rain events, which can overwhelm the capacity of some sewers and result in sanitary sewer overflows and backups. DPW has completed various capital projects to reduce the amount of inflow and infiltration into the system and plans to complete several more projects to further reduce inflow and infiltration. Additionally, the City is partnering with Baltimore County to develop a regional hydraulic model that will be used to identify potential system improvements



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to eliminate the engineered overflow structures that are in the City and County and improve regional water quality.

Q: Why has SSO volume increased yearly since 2022 (after a significant decline from 2018-2022)? Was this expected?

A: Approximately 70% of the overflow volume at the SSO structures in 2023 and 2024 came from only four (4) storm events. SSO volume would continue to decrease if those rainfall events had not occurred. These events were not necessarily expected; it is difficult to predict intense storm events and heavy rainfall, but DPW is aware that they are occurring. This is something that DPW needs to understand and mitigate in future planning efforts.

Q: When SSO structures are eliminated, how is capacity increased so overflows do not occur in homes and streets?

A: Before an engineered overflow structure is eliminated, DPW either increases the pipe size or installs a new pipe to convey that flow. This results in extensive construction, and following that construction activity, DPW monitors that overflow structure for 18 months to ensure the wet weather flows are flowing through the structure and are not discharging into the environment. DPW eliminates the structure once they are confident that no further overflows will occur. In short, DPW only eliminates the SSO structure after they have completed improvements and confirmed their effectiveness.

Q: How are main street sewer cleanouts and replacements prioritized (Especially in residences/townhouses)?

A: First, DPW identifies the root problem. Then, DPW investigates recurring backups and uses their findings to prioritize their intervention.

Q: Are you happy with the cooperation that Baltimore County is providing? Do you trust the data/information that Baltimore County is providing?

A: DPW is confident in its partnership and cooperation with Baltimore County. Major progress has been made between the City and the County, and they agree on implementing solutions.

Q: Why does sanitary sewer mix with stormwater during heavy rain?

A: Rainfall runoff from streets can enter sewers from pick holes in manhole covers, and groundwater from saturated soils can infiltrate through manhole walls and/or fractures, holes, and joints in sewers. For this reason, our focus is on inspecting the sewers, fixing those sewers, and reducing the amount of infiltration that gets into the sewers.

Q: Is Baltimore providing information from sewers showing the prevalence of COVID?

A: No, Baltimore is not providing information for sewers showing the prevalence of COVID.



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Q: City residents are experiencing odor in tap water and in a creek in their neighborhood. How can we report these issues?

A: The first action you should take regarding any water or wastewater issues is to report the issue by calling 311. Once you call 311, dispatch will inform DPW, and an investigator will be sent out to determine the problem. Then, if an issue is discovered, we can determine what resources are needed to address it.

Q: Based on Paragraph 19 of the MCD, related to Sampling - Where is this data stored, and how is it communicated to the Public?

A: DPW MCD data is stored and available on the Baltimore City open-access website and is updated quarterly. All raw data collected throughout the years is included in the PDF of 'DPW's Annual Report' and is also available on the Baltimore City website.

Q: Have there been sewershed studies of the areas of Baltimore City and Baltimore County that feed into Overflow Structures 67, 72, and 3900 Belair Rd? If so, are those reports publicly available, and what steps have been taken and are planned to address the weather in those areas?

A: The City has conducted sewershed studies of the entire city. Those studies were completed several years ago as part of the Phase I work to improve the system based on those studies. This partnership with the County will address those particular overflows, but a regional solution is still needed.

It is state law to report overflows, and this information is available on the Maryland Department of the Environment's website. The website contains a table of all overflows from the entire state, and you can filter data by city and county. Phase I work under the MCD, which is complete, aimed to reduce wet weather overflows into our sewers. Phase II work includes more inspection work and repairs to further reduce the amount of wet weather overflows.

Q: Why is data difficult to locate for the years before 2018 related to E. coli and SSO volume even though the Consent Decree began in 2002?

A: In 2018, reporting requirements were modified at the beginning of our MCD. Data before the MCD exists; however, due to the differing reporting requirements, it is not possible to compare past and current data.

Q: In the past, the storm sewer drains have been labeled. Is there a thought to start labeling the storm sewer drains again in the community to make people aware?

A: There is no recollection of the City labeling the 52,000 plus inlets in the city. At one time, the City promoted and allowed storm drain art as education to prevent inlet chokes.



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Q: Are there different materials that can be used for the pipes that are better and would make the pipes less penetrable, keeping rainwater and other sources out of the pipes?

A: This is the primary purpose of our two rehabilitation projects and why DPW has been doing projects like these for quite some time. These projects aim to rehabilitate the sewers so there is less stormwater and rainwater infiltration. For this reason, DPW will continue to inspect and repair the sewers from now until 2030 and beyond.

Q: What can I do to make my water bill more affordable?

A: There is a program available called Water4All ([Water4All NOW Accepting Applications | Baltimore City Department of Public Works](#)). This program requires an application that asks what your income is. Based on your income, there is an equation that determines a credit. That credit will be put back into your water bill. This is always based on one's income. There is also a program called Promise Pay ([Water Bill Payment Plan Program | Baltimore City Department of Public Works](#)) for those who do not qualify for Water4All. This program offers a payment plan. This information and more about our programs can be found on the DPW website: [Sanitary Sewer Consent Decree Program | Baltimore City Department of Public Works](#)



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IN-PERSON LEARNING STATION QUESTIONS

Learning Station 1: Collection Systems

Presented by Paul Sayan, Deputy Bureau Head for Water and Wastewater, Baltimore City Department of Public Works; Luat Le, PMT, Baltimore City Department of Public Works

Q: Where can I find the Sanitary Sewer Modified Consent Decree document to review?

A: A copy of the MCD can be found on the Maryland Department of the 'Environment's website:

https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/compliance/pages/consent_decree_info.aspx. A

copy of the 'City's various MCD reports/deliverables can be found on the Baltimore City Department of Public 'Work's web site: [Sanitary Sewer Consent Decree Program | Baltimore City Department of Public Works](#)

Q: Does the City model include Baltimore County sewers?

A: Yes, 12 Baltimore County sewer areas discharge wastewater to the City. The County provided models to represent each area for existing and future conditions. Six out of 12 regions were imported into the latest City model. The remaining six models were used separately to generate inflows added to the City model.

Q: Does Baltimore County provide information to the City?

A: Yes, the County provided the City with the latest County sewer models on August 25, 2023, and Jones Falls flow data recorded from 2018 to 2024.

Q: Why do we need the Stony Run Pumping Station?

A: Stony Run Pumping Station diverts wastewater from Upper Jones Falls to the Outfall Interceptor, which reduces sanitary sewer overflows at SSO structures 67, 72, 152, and 154 on the Lower Jones Falls Interceptor.

Learning Station 2: Maintenance & Preventative Maintenance

Presented by Lawrence Osbourne, Engineer, Office of Asset Management, Baltimore City Department of Public Works; Babatunde Oyinloye, Agency IT Supervisor, Baltimore City Department of Public Works; Andree Cochran, Engineer, Baltimore City Department of Public Works

Q: How frequently is the sewage system cleaned?

A: Per the MCD, every pipe greater than 8" in diameter is inspected at least once every seven (7) years as part of the comprehensive cleaning program. Additionally, DPW is required to clean



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during/after every SSO that occurs. Some areas with recurring overflows are on a more frequent cleaning schedule.

Q: How are sewer inspections performed?

A: Inspections are performed with either an inspection camera that travels through the mainline or house connection or an SL-RAT tool that measures the sewer's cleanliness by measuring sound picked up from an upstream manhole to a downstream manhole.

Learning Station 3: Building Backup Support

Presented by Vince Pompa, Operations Officer, Bureau of Water and Wastewater, Baltimore City Department of Public Works

No questions.

Learning Station 4: Compliance

Presented by Kimberly Grove, Chief, Office of Research and Environmental Protection, Baltimore City Department of Public Works

No questions.

Learning Station 5: Headworks

Presented by Timothy Wolfe, Chief, Office of Engineering and Construction, Baltimore City Department of Public Works

Q: Will Baltimore City and Baltimore County collaborate during the development of the Phase II Plan?

A: Yes. Meetings regarding the Phase II Plan have begun and will continue between the City and the County. Our joint goals include providing the most cost-effective plan to benefit the community and environment on a regional scale.

Learning Station 6: Design Projects

Presented by Carlos Stephenson, Engineer II, Baltimore City Department of Public Works

Q: I have observed an uncovered sanitary sewer manhole in my community. What can I do to get this resolved?

A: If you notice an uncovered manhole, please report it by calling 311.

Learning Station 7: Projects in Construction

Presented by Angela Cornish, Construction Project Supervisor II, Baltimore City Department of Public Works

No questions.



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Learning Station 8: Office of Communications & Office of Strategic Alliances

Presented by Jennifer Combs, Public Relations Coordinator, Office of Marketing and Communications, Baltimore City Department of Public Works

No questions.

Learning Station 9: Office of Boards & Commissions

Presented by Deena Joyce, Chief, Office of Boards and Commissions, Baltimore City Department of Public Works

No questions.

Learning Station 10: Small Business Development Program

Presented by Kerwen Whatley, Small Business Development Training Program Director

No questions.