

New EPA runoff rules will hit in 2003

27 towns, cities must clean up
sewers, handle storm water.

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By James L. Franklin
GLOBE STAFF

About 170 cities and towns in Massachusetts, including 27 in the North Weekly area, must comply with new storm water rules released early this year by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

As a result, even some comparatively small towns that are located near urbanized areas must prepare a detailed plan for cleaning up illegal sewer connections and curbing runoff from streets and parking lots by the time the rules take full effect in 2003.

"Initially, it shouldn't cost a great deal of money," said Eileen Pannetier, president of Comprehensive Environmental Inc., a Dedham-based consulting firm.

But for communities that are already under court orders because of water-related environmental problems and are located near sensitive water sources, the new rules could be much more expensive. In some cases, after they take full effect, they would require treatment of runoff from new or redesigned streets and other impervious surfaces.

Pannetier's firm, the Charles River Watershed

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New EPA water runoff rules loom in 2003

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Association, and the environmental studies program of Brandeis University in Waltham will cosponsor a workshop for local officials Tuesday at the university.

A handful of communities already are dealing with the rules, formally called Phase 2 Storm-water Regulations, but many others are just learning that they must comply with them.

The preliminary list of cities and towns was published in the Federal Register, based on US Census definitions of urbanized areas from the 1990 census. Currently, the affected cities and towns in the North Weekly area are:

Amesbury, Beverly, Chelsea, Danvers, Essex, Everett, Georgetown, Gloucester, Hamilton, Haverhill, Lynn, Lynnfield, Malden, Manchester, Marblehead, Melrose, Merrimac, Middleton, Nahant,

Peabody, Revere, Rockport, Salem, Saugus, Swampscott, Wakefield, and Wenham.

Based on results of the 2000 Census, officials say, other towns could be added to the list, but it is unlikely that any already on it would drop off.

However, Thelma Murphy, regional storm water coordinator for the EPA in New England, called the list "very broad," adding that her agency is working with the state Department of Environmental Protection to narrow down the list and notify communities by the end of the year.

"The meat of the program is that all communities on the list must develop a storm water management program," Murphy said. "The most capital intensive measure involves detection and elimination of illegal sewer connections."

Other measures include control of runoff from construction projects, public education and outreach, and pollution prevention, said **Stephanie Hanson of Comprehensive Environmental**.

Pannetier and others cite Waltham and Scituate, which are on the list of Phase 2 communities, and Ipswich, which is not on the list, as being far ahead of other towns in dealing with the issues presented

by the rules.

Jack Snedeker, director of public works in Waltham, said his city began two years ago to identify illegal sewer connections.

"We looked for dry weather flows, which are an indication of illegal connections," he said. "We found about five instances of that and have now chased them back and squared them away."

Snedeker said Waltham began dealing with the problem early because federal and state environmental officials have set the goal of making the Charles River, which runs through Waltham, swimmable and fishable.

Meanwhile, Ipswich, which is not on the Phase 2 list, "has also gone through and fixed illegal storm drains to protect its own environment, among other things, because they had clam beds to protect," Pannetier said.

The Ipswich Pollution Control Committee has used a \$10,000 grant from the state's Office of Coastal Zone Management to prepare a storm water management plan that would meet the Phase 2 rules, according to Wayne Castonguay, a member of the committee.

Some measures are as simple as checking storm drains for dry weather flows once a year, watching for illegal sewer connections,

and adopting a "pooper scooper" law to reduce the amount of dog feces, which lowers the fecal coliform count in storm water discharges. Other measures would require construction of treatment facilities for some storm drains, at a cost of from \$600,000 to \$900,000, Castonguay said.

Towns that are trying to comply with these rules early are also more likely to get federal and state grant money to pay for the work, Pannetier said.

Initial plans to comply with the rules, which must be filed by towns on the Phase 2 list, will probably cost about \$10,000 for small towns and about \$50,000 for most larger communities, she estimated.

Subsequent measures will generally not be capital intensive, except for municipalities with a record of problems, she said.

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► *The Phase Two Stormwater Workshop will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday at Brandeis University in Waltham. Registration is \$35. For information, call 603-424-8444, ext. 300, or use a Web browser to go to www.ceiengineers.com/newpage15.htm.*