

STATE OF WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PUBLIC NOTICE OF INTENT TO REISSUE A WISCONSIN POLLUTANT DISCHARGE ELIMINATION
SYSTEM (WPDES) PERMIT No. WI-0003077-08-0

Permittee: Cascades Tissue Group Wisconsin Inc, 1200 Forest St, Eau Claire, WI 54703

Facility Where Discharge Occurs: Cascades Tissue Group Wisconsin Inc, 1200 Forest St., Eau Claire, WI

Receiving Water and Location: The Chippewa River in Eau Claire

Brief Facility Description: The Cascades Tissue manufacturing plant in Eau Claire has an average production of 167 tons per day (TPD) of tissue base sheet from deinked recycled paper. Pre-consumer and post-consumer wastepaper bundles are hydrated into a slurry, and then centrifuges, screens and dissolved air flotation units are used to separate contaminants and recover useable paper fibers. Following paper fiber recovery, a two stage whitening process can be used (if needed) to oxidize ink particles and brighten the paper fibers. Cascades Tissue produces tissue, napkins and paper towels from the recycled paper fibers on two paper machines.

The pulp recovery and papermaking wastewaters are treated by gravity settling in a primary clarifier, aerobic degradation in a 2 million gallon lined, biological treatment lagoon with surface aerators, and final settling in the secondary clarifiers. Inks and coatings captured in the dissolved air flotation units make up 50% of the organic load to the wastewater treatment plant. The papermaking wastewaters and filtrate from the sludge belt presses are the other two main loads to the wastewater treatment plant. About 10,000 gallons per day of boiler blowdown and leachate from the closed paper sludge landfill are minor additional loads to the treatment plant. The final treated wastewater is routed back to the factory basement where it can be discharged through the Dells Dam (outfall 001) to the Chippewa River or routed back into the papermaking process for reuse. The sanitary wastewater from the factory bathrooms is not discharged to the river and is sent to the Eau Claire Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The Cascades Tissue deinking and paper making activities result in an average treated wastewater discharge of 1.9 million gallons per day (MGD) to the Chippewa River. This is a 20% reduction in wastewater discharge to the river over the last 5 years even though the paper production has remained stable. Multiple projects have been implemented to reduce water use or recycle wastewater at this Cascades Tissue plant. However, the reduced wastewater volumes have created some challenges in operating some of the wastewater treatment units due to the flow rates being lower than the treatment plant design rate. At times, the primary clarifier flow-through volumes have needed to be increased by the addition of clean water to the primary influent. Cascades Tissue has a consistent and very effective wastewater treatment process; the Biochemical Oxygen Demand and Total Suspended Solids discharge levels are normally 10%-20% of the limits for discharge to the Chippewa River.

Permit Drafter: Jeffrey Brauer, DNR, 101 S. Webster St. PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921, (608) 267-7643, jeff.brauer@wisconsin.gov

Basin Engineer: Stephen Thon, DNR, 1300 W. Clairemont Avenue, Eau Claire, WI 54701, (715) 839-3776, stephen.thon@wisconsin.gov

The Department has tentatively decided that the above specified WPDES permit should be reissued.

Limitations and conditions which the Department believes adequately protect the receiving water are included in the proposed permit. Land application of waste shall be done in accordance with permit conditions and applicable codes. All land application sites shall be approved prior to their use. To receive a list of approved sites, or to be notified of potential approvals, contact the basin engineer.

Proposed Mercury Variance: Sampling by the Department and the permittee indicates that the Chippewa River background mercury levels (upper 99th percentile value of 9.1 ng/L) are greater than the NR 105 Wisconsin water quality criteria of 1.3 nanograms/liter (ng/L or parts per trillion). Since this river water is taken into the plant and the wastewater effluent from Cascades Tissue contains slightly more mercury than these upstream river levels, the discharge permit is required to contain a mercury water quality-based effluent limitation (WQBEL). Since there currently are no feasible additional wastewater treatment process for these trace levels of mercury (other than the activated sludge process already used by the facility), Cascades Tissue has applied for an alternative mercury effluent limitation (AMEL). Granting the alternative mercury effluent limitation would allow Cascades Tissue to continue (but not increase) the current mercury discharge level and continue to implement mercury minimization efforts in their existing waste paper recovery and papermaking operations.

The Department has tentatively concluded that Cascades Tissue has qualified for a variance based on the application information and the findings provided in s. NR 106.145(1), Wis. Adm. Code. The mercury variance application includes a mercury pollutant minimization program as required under s. NR 106.145(8), Wis. Adm. Code. The Department and the permittee have agreed upon a 99th percentile daily maximum **12.1 ng/L** alternative mercury effluent limitation. The permit also proposes influent and effluent mercury monitoring, and continuing efforts by Cascades Tissue to minimize the trace amounts of mercury contained in the wastewater discharge. The Department

proposes to grant the AMEL, which represents a variance to the water quality standard used to derive the WQBEL, as provided for under s. NR 106.145(6), Wis. Adm. Code. The designated use of the receiving water will not change as a result of the variance.

Persons wishing to comment on or object to the proposed permit action, or to request a public hearing, may write to the Department of Natural Resources at the permit drafter's address. All comments or suggestions received no later than 30 days after the publication date of this public notice will be considered along with other information on file in making a final decision regarding the permit. Anyone providing comments in response to this public notice will receive a notification of the Department's final decision when the permit is issued. Where designated as a reviewable surface water discharge permit, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is allowed up to 90 days to submit comments or objections regarding this permit determination. If no comments are received on the proposed permit from anyone, including U.S. EPA, the permit will be issued as proposed.

The Department may schedule a public informational hearing if requested by any person and shall schedule a public informational hearing if a petition requesting a hearing is received from 5 or more persons or if response to this notice indicates significant public interest pursuant to s. 283.49, Stats. Requests for a public informational hearing shall state the following: the name and address of the person(s) requesting the hearing; the interest in the proposed permit of the person(s) requesting the hearing; the reasons for the request; and the issues proposed to be considered at the hearing.

Information on file for this permit action, including the draft permit and fact sheet (if required), may be inspected and copied at the permit drafter's or basin engineer's office, Monday through Friday (except holidays), between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Please call the permit drafter or basin engineer for directions to their office location, if necessary. Information on this permit action may also be obtained by calling the permit drafter at (608) 267-7643 or by writing to the Department. Reasonable costs (usually 20 cents per page) will be charged for copies of information in the file other than the public notice and fact sheet. Permit information is also available on the internet at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/ww>. Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation, including the provision of informational material in an alternative format, will be made to qualified individuals upon request.

PUBLISHING NEWSPAPER: Leader-Telegram, PO Box 570, Eau Claire, WI, 54702-0570
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