

TO: Mr. Gerrit Jobsis
Scriters@bellsouth.net

Dear Mr. Jobsis:

Thank you for your correspondence regarding your opposition to the Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) Section 208 Water Quality Plan Amendment and its impact on the Lower Saluda River. The amendment is currently with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) where a decision to certify is under consideration.

The CMCOG Board, on March 22, 2001, amended its area-wide 208 Plan to enlarge the I-20 Wastewater Treatment Facility to 990,000 gallons and to designate it as a permanent treatment facility discharging to the Lower Saluda River, subject to upgrade to tertiary wastewater treatment. The plan was also amended to extend the operation of the Coventry Woods Wastewater Treatment facility until January, 2006.

The plan to eliminate these discharges goes back several years and has been a very complicated and involved process. The Central Midlands 208 Water Quality Management Plan went through a major revision in 1993. That revision provided a strategy for sewerage [sic] the Lower Saluda River, 12 Mile Creek and 14 Mile Creek basins and eliminating all discharges to the western side of the Lower Saluda River. A phased system of force mains and gravity lines was to be constructed with sewage treatment provided by the City of Cayce. The 1993 amendment acknowledged that water quality in the Lower Saluda River was jeopardized and elimination of point sources to the river and its tributaries would help to alleviate the situation. The amended plan was to be carried out in concert with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Saluda River Corridor Plan, which designated the waterbody as a state scenic river. Both the Town of Lexington and the Lexington County Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission were to serve as Management Agencies for implementation purposes.

The amended plan provided for the connection of the Carolina Water Service (CWS) owned I-20 and Watergate wastewater treatment facilities (WWTFs) to a regional sewer system owned and operated by the Town of Lexington during phase 1 of plan implementation. The town was to provide a bulk rate to private utilities, including CWS. However, upon completion of Phase 1 of the regional system in 1999, elimination and connection was delayed because the town and CWS were unable to agree upon a reasonable rate. After extensive negotiations, the parties arrived at a compromise agreement to make the I-20 WWTF a permanent facility with continued discharge to the Saluda River, and the on-schedule elimination of the Watergate plant. The agreement has the effect of providing what the parties believe are reasonable rates for the 3,300 customers of the service area.

The Central Midlands Council of governments included a public participation component before amending the plan. Comments from the interested public were received during and subsequent to a public informational meeting conducted by CMCOG on February 21, 2001. The Department of Health and Environmental Control has also received numerous comments regarding the amendment since it was submitted to them for certification on March 26, 2001. All of the people urged DHEC to deny certification of the Central Midlands COG March 22nd amendment. No support has been received that favors the amendment.

The consideration of public comments, as well as other factors, are part of the DHEC certification process that is currently under way. I will be sure that your comments are forwarded to them so they will also be aware of your opposition to the amendment. Anyone that submitted a comment or inquiry, whether to my office or directly to DHEC, will be notified of the certification decision when it is finalized. Thank you for your interest in this matter. If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jim Hodges