



Pennsylvania
**Department of
Environmental Protection**
Bureau of Clean Water

**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)¹ for Clean Water Program
New and Reissuance Individual Site Permit Applications for
Beneficial Use of Biosolids
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¹ **DISCLAIMER:** The process and procedures outlined in this SOP are intended to supplement existing requirements. Nothing in the SOP shall affect regulatory requirements. The process, procedures and interpretations herein are not an adjudication or a regulation. There is no intent on the part of DEP to give the rules in this SOP that weight or deference. This document establishes the framework within which DEP will exercise its administrative discretion in the future. DEP reserves the discretion to deviate from this policy statement if circumstances warrant. All hyperlinks in this SOP are intended for DEP use only.



Version History

Date	Version	Description	Author
7/7/2026	2.2	Updated to clarify the applicability of permit fees for specific government and quasi-government agencies/corporations.	William Gaspari
5/29/2026	2.1	Updated to clarify the "Application Received Date" and related submission dates.	William Gaspari
6/30/2024	2.0	Updated to reflect Payback	Kevin McLeary
7/16/2013	1.1	Updated Section III to indicate that incompleteness letters will be sent to permittees if a renewal application is significantly deficient.	Sean Furjanic
11/9/2012	1.0	Original	Sean Furjanic



OBJECTIVE	This SOP describes the procedures by which the Clean Water Program will process applications for new and reissuance (renewal) individual site permits for the beneficial use of biosolids. The authorization type covered by this SOP is "PABIS" (Individual Site Permit for Beneficial Use of Biosolids by Land Application). Under the Governor's Executive Order 2023-07 (Building Efficiency in the Commonwealth's Permitting, Licensing, and Certification Processes), DEP has 115 business days to take a final action on new PABIS Application. Failure to take action within this period of time may result in a refund in the NOI fee ("PAYback").
SCOPE	1. In general, the biosolids coordinator ("application manager") will not approve the land application of biosolids under a General Permit (PAG-07, PAG-08 or PAG-09) where one or more of the following apply: a. Land application is proposed in a watershed classified as Exceptional Value (EV) in Title 25 Pa. Code Chapter 93. b. The application manager determines that the proposed land application will be more appropriately controlled under an individual site permit due to unusual site conditions, or otherwise an individual site permit is considered necessary to ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act, the Clean Streams Law, the Solid Waste Management Act or other interstate compacts or international agreements and the applicable rules and regulations promulgated under each. c. Land application is proposed by persons with a significant history of non-compliance with prior permits issued by DEP or the applicable state authority. d. Land application of biosolids for beneficial use is proposed in an area that may adversely affect a listed endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat and the best management practices submitted in the 30-Day Notice are not sufficient to ensure no adverse effect. 2. Where application in EV watersheds is proposed, individual site permits will not be issued unless the applicant already has General Permit coverage or an individual permit for generation. 3. Individual site permits may be required when it is determined that site conditions are unsuitable and would not comply with the General Permit coverage (e.g., a farm site with slopes greater than 25 percent). 4. The biosolids that will be land applied under an individual site permit must be covered by a General Permit PAG-07 or PAG-08 or an individual generator permit.



	5. Individual site permits may only be issued to a single generator or preparer of biosolids. 6. An individual site permit is required for land application in an EV watershed even if the generator or preparer of biosolids already has approval to land apply through an individual generator permit.
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	The SOP is organized sequentially by activities that will be completed. The functional roles that are responsible for the activity are identified with the name of the activity as follows: • Preliminary Data Management and Fee Processing (Administrative Staff) • Completeness Review (Sewage Planning Specialist) • Technical Review and Preparation of Draft Permit (Application Manager) • Final Decision (Program Manager) • Final Permit Processing (Administrative Staff or Application Manager) Administrative Staff – Administrative staff based on regional staffing and policy. Administrative staff are responsible for receiving and date stamping hard copies of applications, scanning them into the computer and emailing them to the appropriate Application Manager. They are responsible for fee processing. They are responsible for creating an electronic file folder and entering the module into eFACTS if the Application Manager does not. Application Manager – Responsible for <u>ensuring fees are in accordance with 25 Pa. Code Chapter 271</u>. Responsible for completeness and technical reviews of the module, coordinating the review with other staff, such as the Hydrogeologist. Prioritization of application received is expected with the assistance of the Section Chief. Responsible for communicating with the applicant and for preparing Deficiency, Approval and Denial Letters. They are responsible for ensuring the application meets all review timelines. Responsible for briefing management during an Elevated Review. Responsible for distributing final letters to all parties, closing out eFACTS and populating the electronic file folder with the module and all supplemental information. Section Chief – Responsible for reviewing and revising the application Deficiency, Approval and Denial letters prior to signing the letters. Responsible for being part of the Elevated Review Process. Responsible for ensuring the application meets all review timelines. Program Manager – Responsible for being part of the Elevated Review Process. Responsible for ensuring the application meets all review timelines.



	Regional Director or Bureau Director - Responsible for being part of the Elevated Review Process, if applicable.
MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT	• Computer • Access to eFACTS • Access to eMapPA • Photocopier/Scanner • 25 Pa. Code Chapters 271, 275, 285, 91, 92a, 102, and 105 • The Clean Streams Law

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 7

Details / Procedures / Steps 7

 I. Preliminary Data Management and Fee Processing (Administrative Staff)..... 7

 II. Completeness Review (Application Manager) 8

 III. Technical Review and Preparation of Draft Permit (Application Manager)..... 10

 IV. Final Decision (Program Manager) 14

 V. Final Permit Processing (Administrative Staff or Application Manager) 14

References.....15

Appendices.....15



INTRODUCTION

This SOP describes the procedures by which the Clean Water Program will process applications for new and reissuance (renewal) individual site permits for the beneficial use of biosolids. The authorization type covered by this SOP is "PABIS" (Individual Site Permit for Beneficial Use of Biosolids by Land Application).

DETAILS / PROCEDURES / STEPS

I. Preliminary Data Management and Fee Processing (Administrative Staff)

When applications are received, administrative staff will promptly:

A. Create the authorization record in [eFACTS](#).

1. Select the proper auth type code ("PABIS") and verify that the correct fee was submitted (\$500).
 - a. If no fee is included in the application (e.g., the applicant selects the wrong categories and ends up with PUP not requiring a fee), then the application shall not be entered into eFacts until the fee is received. The day the fee is received shall be used as the application received date, as based on submission type (see Section I.A.6.). An application with no fee shall be considered incomplete and notification shall be sent to the applicant informing them that the fee will need to be submitted.
 - b. If an incorrect fee is included in the application, then the application shall be entered into eFacts using the appropriate received date, as based on submission type (see Section I.A.6.). An application with an incorrect fee shall be considered incomplete and notification shall be sent to the applicant informing them of the incorrect fee.

A subtask of "SDN" (Send Deficiency Notice/Receive Response) shall be entered into eFacts with the corresponding date the incompleteness notification is sent to the applicant. A technical review of the application will not proceed until the correct fee is received.

NOTE – Only the following applicants are exempt from permit application fees:

- the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection,
- the United States Environmental Protection Agency,
- the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission,
- the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources,
- the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation,
- the National Railroad Passenger Corporation d/b/a Amtrak,
- the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, and
- Port Authorities that operate in the Commonwealth.

Any other applicant requesting a fee exemption must be referred to the Bureau of Regulatory Counsel for review.

2. Prepare the physical check payment for transmission to the regional business office following [Management Directive OAM-1000-01](#), and enter the fee payment against the authorization in [eFACTS](#), unless the client is fee exempt. A copy of the check will be made and placed in the application file.



3. Select the proper application type using the appropriate regional organization code. Where the client previously was covered by a General Permit and must now apply for an individual permit or the decision is otherwise made to convert the permit to an individual permit, the application type should be NEW.
 4. Enter a 9-digit program-specific ID for the application as follows:
 - The first five digits will be "PABIS."
 - The sixth through ninth digits will be a regional designator, as follows: SERO — 00012199, NERO — 2201-3499, SCRO — 3501-4700, NCRO — 4801-6099, SWRO — 61018299, and NWRO — 8301-9899. Numbers will be selected sequentially by order of authorization.
 5. Associate the proper client and site to the project/authorization. If necessary, create the client, site, client/site relationship, at least one sub facility (SF) and the primary facility (PF) Use a PF Type of "Beneficial Land Use," a PF Kind of "Agriculture," and an SF Type of "Parcel." The PF Other ID must match the program-specific ID on the application screen.
 6. Enter the date the application was received ("Recvd") and the date administrative staff creates the authorization ("Admin") into [eFACTS](#) Application Screen. The application date received shall be based on the type of submission, as follows:
 - a. Electronic Submissions via Public Upload with Payment (PUP): The date indicated by the system-generated timestamp upon successful submission.
 - b. Physical Submissions: The date the submission is physically delivered to a DEP office as established by a verifiable system timestamp or documented physical receipt.
 7. If required by [eFACTS](#) to create the authorization, select the lead reviewer.
 8. Select the Master Auth or set the current authorization to be the Master Auth, as appropriate.
 9. Create a subtask of "COMPL" (B/E Completeness Review) under the Completeness Review task in [eFACTS](#) and enter a start date that corresponds to the date the application was received.
- B. Enter consultant information.
- If a consultant is identified on the application, select the appropriate client or otherwise create the consultant as a client on the Application Screen. C.
- C. Enter or otherwise review and update PF Details.
1. Update PF Mailing Address (client address) and Location Address (site address) in accordance with the application, as necessary.
 2. Ensure the Client ID and Other ID of the PF are identical to those for the authorization, otherwise update the PF

II. Completeness Review (Application Manager)

Completeness reviews of individual site permit applications will be completed by the application manager in the regional office that covers the county in which the applicant is located.



Application managers should finish the Completeness Review within 10 business days of DEP's receipt of an application.

When the application manager receives the application from administrative staff, the application manager will:

- A. Review the application for completeness and overall technical adequacy. A complete and technically adequate application includes the following, not including the fee that is addressed in Step I:
 1. Original individual permit application (signed and notarized) and 2 copies for in-state or 7 copies for out-of-state applicators.
 2. Completed Landowner Consent form.
 3. Natural Resource Conservation Service map of the site.
 4. Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory results.
 5. Example of how application rates will be calculated.
 6. Background soil chemical analytical results for the constituents in Table 1 of the application.
 7. Copy of Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan or Farm Conservation Plan.
 8. Summary of animals and manure nutrient balance calculations.
 9. List of adjacent landowners.
 10. Certified mail receipt indicating that the municipality and county conservation district where the site is located were notified.
 11. In addition, the application manager will verify that the generator or preparer of biosolids is already covered under a General Permit or an individual generator permit.

NOTE — In general, if the applicant submits an older application form that is not the most recent, the application manager may deem any information that is missing an insignificant or significant deficiency, at the application manager's discretion. If the application is not denied as a result, the application manager will notify the consultant or applicant that a more recent version of the application is available for future use.

- B. Follow the procedures contained in the [SOP for Management of Late NPDES Permit Renewal Applications](#) (BPNPSM-ENF-001) if the application is for a permit renewal and was received late.
- C. Complete the following data management tasks in [eFACTS](#)
 1. Create, or otherwise review and edit, all Parcel (PAR) SFs listed in the application. Enter SF latitude and longitude.
 2. Review and edit the PF latitude and longitude, using the coordinates reported on the application or the central point of the site.
 3. Link all applicable PAR SFs to the authorization record.



- D. If none of the criteria in A.1 —11 is found to be deficient, the application manager will proceed to Step III H. No "completeness letter" will be issued.
- E. If the application is incomplete and the deficiencies are determined to be insignificant (i.e., an item that in the application manager's judgment can be corrected within one business day), the application manager will contact the applicant (or the applicant's authorized representative) by phone to explain the deficiency and offer the opportunity to submit the necessary materials informally by the end of the next business day to make the application complete. The application manager may or may not (at the application manager's discretion) follow up the phone call with an email to the applicant and/or consultant.

NOTE — The application manager should attempt to communicate with the applicant directly. Where this fails, the application manager may attempt to communicate with the consultant, if any.

A phone log will be kept by each application manager that details the name of the person contacted, the day and time of the conversation, and notes for all communications regarding the completeness and technical reviews. All phone logs will be retained with the application file during and following permit issuance, or otherwise a database or spreadsheet will be used and made accessible to allow others to check latest correspondence for a case if the application manager is out of the office.

In the event the application manager is unable to contact the applicant or consultant by phone within 5 business days, the application manager will proceed to Step III F (for new applications) or Step III G (for renewal applications). After the necessary materials have been received (receipt by email or fax is acceptable except when original signatures, plans or seals are needed), and assuming the application can then be considered complete, the application manager will then proceed to Step III H. If the submission does not correct the original insignificant deficiencies, the application manager will proceed to Step III F (for new applications) or Step III G (for renewal applications).

- F. For **new** applications, if the applicant fails to submit the requested information by the next business day following a phone call (or multiple attempts to contact the applicant or consultant by phone), or if the deficiencies are determined to be significant, the application manager will prepare a letter that denies the application, for the Program Manager's signature. The template in WMS found at *Letters — Application Denial Letter* will be used. The [eFACTS](#) authorization record will be closed out by using the disposition code "Denied." A subtask of "DENC" (Application Incomplete — Denied) will be entered into [eFACTS](#) against the Completeness Review Task, with start and end dates corresponding to the date of the letter. The application fee will not be returned. A new application fee will be required as part of a resubmission.
- G. For **renewal** applications, if the applicant fails to submit the requested information by the next business day following a phone call (or multiple attempts to contact the applicant or consultant by phone), or if the deficiencies are determined to be significant, the application manager will transmit a letter identifying the deficiencies. The template in WMS found at *Letters — Renewal Application Incomplete Letter* will be used. The application manager will enter a subtask of "SDN" (Send Deficiency Notice/Receive Response) into [eFACTS](#) with a start date corresponding to the date of the letter.
- H. Enter an end date for the "COMPL" subtask, when the application is deemed complete.

III. Technical Review and Preparation of Draft Permit (Application Manager)



Following completion of the Completeness Review, the application manager will evaluate site conditions, determine facility-specific permit conditions and prepare the permit documents.

- A. Enter a "DR" (Decision Review) subtask in [eFACTS](#) under the Technical Review task, with a start date corresponding to the date following the determination that the application is complete.
- B. Complete a site visit and document the following on the "Administrative and Technical Review Checklist" for individual site permits:
 1. Slopes generally do not exceed 25%.
 2. Conservation Plan is being implemented.
 3. Setbacks will be maintained:
 - a. 100 feet from perennial streams.
 - b. 100 feet from exceptional value wetlands.
 - c. 33 feet from intermittent streams.
 - d. 11 inches above seasonal high-water table.
 - e. 3.3 feet above regional groundwater table.
 - f. 100 feet from the edge of sinkholes.
 - g. 300 feet from occupied dwellings.
 - h. 300 feet from a water source.
 4. Proper postings are or will be in place.
 5. Proposals to store biosolids on-site meet applicable regulations.
 6. Soils analyses document that levels of pollutants in soils are and will continue to be below cumulative pollutant loading rates (CPLRs).
 7. Verify that adjacent landowners have been notified.
- C. Consider the combination and interrelationship of site features and best management practices proposed at the site and any unique site features to assess if any additional best management practice (e.g., an additional setback) may be needed to adequately protect local water resources. If an additional best management practice(s) is warranted, staff will include the practice(s) in the permit.
- D. If necessary, transmit a technical deficiency letter.
 1. In the event, upon a detailed technical review of the application, the application manager determines that information beyond the scope of the Completeness Review is not available or otherwise there are technical problems with the application or proposals therein, the application manager will make a determination on whether the deficiency is significant or insignificant. In general, insignificant deficiencies are those that can be corrected quickly by the applicant (e.g., one day) so that there is only a minimal processing delay.
 2. If the deficiencies are determined to be insignificant, the application manager will contact the applicant and/or the project consultant by phone and request a response by the close of the next business day. A phone log will be maintained by the application manager to record the results of all such conversations. A follow-up email may be transmitted at the application manager's discretion.



3. If a) the insignificant deficiencies are not corrected by the timeline requested, b) multiple phone calls to the applicant and consultant fail to establish communication, or c) the application manager determines that the deficiencies are significant, the application manager will prepare a Technical Deficiency (TD) Letter. The number of TD Letters will be limited to one in most circumstances and will be issued prior to development of the draft permit. The letter will request a response within 15 business days or a longer period of time at the application manager's discretion (as long as it does not exceed the processing deadline in [eFACTS](#)). The application manager will enter a subtask of "SDN" (Send Deficiency Notice/Receive Response) into [eFACTS](#) with a start date corresponding to the date of the letter.
 4. If the applicant responds to the TD letter within 15 business days or the alternative schedule, the application manager will enter an end date for the "SDN" subtask in [eFACTS](#) corresponding to the date the submission was received, review the submission and, assuming it addresses the concerns raised in the TD letter, proceed with Step III D. If the submission does not address the concerns in the TD letter, return to Step III C.1.
 5. If the applicant fails to respond to the TD letter within 15 business days or the alternative schedule, or if the response fails to address the issues raised in the TD letter, the application manager will enter a subtask of "ELEV" (Elevated Review Process) and brief the Section Chief on the circumstances.
 6. If following the Elevated Review Process the decision is to deny the application, the application manager will enter a "DENT" subtask (App Technically Deficient — Denied) into [eFACTS](#) using start and end dates for the "DENT" subtask corresponding to the date of the decision, enter end dates for the "SDN" and "ELEV" subtasks, and prepare a letter that denies the application for the Program Manager's signature. The authorization will be closed in [eFACTS](#) using the disposition code "Denied."
- E. Prepare the draft permit documents and issue the draft permit.
1. Application managers or administrative staff will use the template for individual site permits to develop the draft permit. The template can be found in the [Bureau of Clean Water's Teams Biosolids Coordinators folder](#)
 2. Application managers or administrative staff will develop a draft permit cover letter.
 3. Application managers will develop a posting for the PA Bulletin and provide it to administrative staff.
 - a. Administrative staff or the application manager (regions may decide) will complete the following: A start date for the subtask "DP" will be entered in [eFACTS](#) for the Technical Review Task. The start date is the date of permit issuance.
 - b. One or more copies of the complete draft permit package, consisting of the cover letter, draft permit, and draft permit notice for applicant posting will be made for mailing to the applicant and consultant, as applicable. The copy with the original signature will be mailed to the applicant. One copy will be retained for the case file.
- F. Review applicant and public comments.

The 30-day comment period begins on the date the notice is published in the [PA Bulletin](#).



1. The application manager will review comments received from the applicant (or the applicant's consultant) and decide whether the draft permit should or may be modified to address the comments. The application manager will consult with the Operations Chief, Central Office and regional counsel, as necessary. If the permit will be issued, the applicant's comments will be addressed in the final permit cover letter. In general, Central Office should be contacted for assistance where comments concerning the standard language of the permit are made unless the application manager has experience in addressing similar comments.
2. The application manager will review comments received from the public. In general, if the application manager, Section Chief or Program Manager determines that there is "significant public interest" in holding a hearing, the application manager will coordinate with the regional community relations coordinator to schedule a public hearing and prepare a PA Bulletin notice to announce the hearing. The subtask "PH" will be used in [eFACTS](#) to document the public hearing and enter a start date corresponding to the date the need for a public hearing was determined. Following the hearing and receipt of the hearing transcript, the application manager will prepare a Comment-Response document, attach it to the final issuance or denial letter, and copy all commentators on the letter. An end date will be entered into the "PH" subtask in [eFACTS](#) corresponding to the final permit issuance date. All commentators and the applicant will receive a copy of the Comment-Response document.

If public comments are received and a hearing is not held, the application manager will review the comments and decide whether the draft permit should or may be modified to address the comments. All public comments received will be responded to in writing as part of a Comment-Response document that is issued with the final approved permit or denial letter. The applicant and commentators will be copied on the Comment-Response document.

- G. Application managers may not modify the standard language of the permit unless Central Office agrees with the modification so that a change can be made to the statewide template. G. Decide whether to redraft the permit.

If the application manager decides to 1) make permit conditions more stringent or 2) make permit conditions less stringent where the application manager is aware there is public interest in the permit, a revised draft permit will be prepared and issued with a new public notice in the PA Bulletin.

- H. Prepare final permit documents following the public comment period.

1. Application managers will enter an end date for the "DP" subtask 30 days following publication in the PA Bulletin.
2. If there are unresolved violations associated with the applicant or site that could, in the application manager's, Section Chief's and/or Program Manager's judgment, be addressed most effectively through issuance of the permit to require implementation of measures designed to achieve compliance, permit issuance may proceed despite the unresolved violations. Otherwise, the permit should be held until compliance issues are resolved, and a subtask of "NC" (Non-Compliance Prohibits Final Decision) should be entered into [eFACTS](#).
3. The application manager will make any final edits to the individual site permit and apply effective and expiration dates to the first page.
 - a. For new permits, the effective date will be the date of issuance and the expiration date will be five years minus one day from the effective date.



- b. For reissued permits, the effective date will be the day after the expiration date of the current permit, and the expiration date will be five years minus one day from the effective date.
4. The application manager will prepare a final cover letter.
5. The application manager will prepare the PA Bulletin notice that identifies DEP's final decision on the application.
6. The final permit package will be assembled and provided to either 1) the Section Chief, for final review or 2) the Program Manager, at region's discretion.

IV. Final Decision (Program Manager)

The Program Manager will complete the following tasks upon receipt of the final permit package:

- A. Review the final permit documents.
- B. Sign the final permit cover letter and the first page of the permit document if the Program Manager is in agreement with the content or otherwise return the package to the application manager for edits.
- C. Submit the final, signed permit package to administrative staff or the application manager (at region's discretion).

V. Final Permit Processing (Administrative Staff or Application Manager)

Administrative staff or the application manager will complete the following tasks upon receipt of the final, signed permit package:

- A. Enter effective and expiration dates for the permit into [eFACTS](#)
- B. Enter an end date for the "DR" subtask in [eFACTS](#) corresponding to the issuance date.
- C. Issue the authorization in [eFACTS](#)
- D. Make copies, and mail the copies to the applicant, consultant, and other interested parties as applicable. Final permits will not be issued via Certified Mail.
- E. Transmit the case files to the regional file room.



REFERENCES

[SOP for Management of Late NPDES Permit Renewal Applications](#)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Acronyms

Acronym	Name
ACHD	Allegheny County Health Department
BUS7	Land application of exceptional quality biosolids general permit
BUS7O	Land application of exceptional quality biosolids, out-of-state general permit
BUS8	Land application of quality biosolids general permit
BUS8O	Land application of quality biosolids, out-of-state general permit
BUS9	Land application of residential septage general permit
BUS9O	Land application of residential septage, out-of-state general permit
COMPL	Completeness review
CV	Conveyance subfacility
DENC	Application incomplete – denied
DENT	Application technically deficient – denied
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection
DP	Draft permit
DR	Decision review
DRBC	Delaware River Basin Commission
ECHD	Erie County Health Department
eFACTS	Environmental Facility Application Compliance Tracking System
ELEV	Elevated review process
IRIS	Individual Residential Spray Irrigation System
LR	Lead Reviewer
NCRO	Northcentral Regional Office
NERO	Northeast Regional Office
NOI	Notice of Intent
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NWRO	Northwest Regional Office



O&M	Operation and maintenance
OSBP	Out-of-state biosolids processor
PABGO	Biosolids out-of-state individual generator permit
PABIG	Biosolids individual generator permit
PABIS	Biosolids individual site permit
PAG	Pennsylvania General Permit
PC	Private composter
PF	Primary facility
PH	Public hearing
PS	Pump station subfacility
SCRO	Southcentral Regional Office
SDN	Send deficiency notice
SERO	Southeast Regional Office
SEO	Sewage Enforcement Officer
SF	Subfacility
SN	Sewage Non-Publicly owned
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSN	Site suitability notice
SWRO	Southwest Regional Office
TD	Technical deficiency
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WMS	Water management system
W2CAF	Water Quality Management Part II Manure storage facility
W2IW	Water Quality Management Part II Industrial Waste Treatment Plant
WQ2LA	Water Quality Management Part II Sewerage Treatment Plant Land Application
WQ2PS	Water Quality Management Part II sewer extensions and pump stations
WQ2TP	Water Quality Management Part II sewage treatment facility
WQG01	Water Quality Management general permit for small flow treatment facilities
WQG02	Water Quality Management general permit for sewer extensions and pump stations
WQJ91	Water Quality Management Part II Pesticides permit