Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection
Bureau of Clean Water

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[1] for Clean Water Program
New and Reissuance PAG-09 NOIs
(Beneficial Use of Residential Septage by Land Application)
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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. DEP does not intend to give 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
2/14/2013	1.0	Original	Sean Furjanic

OBJECTIVE	This SOP describes the procedures used by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Clean Water Program will process Notices of Intent (NOIs) for new and reissuance (renewal) Beneficial Use of Residential Septage General PAG-09 permits. The authorization types covered by this SOP are "BUS9" (PAG-09 Beneficial Use of Residential Septage by Land Application, In PA) and "BUS9O" (PAG-09 Beneficial Use of Residential Septage by Land Application, Out of State). Regional offices review "BUS9" NOIs while DEP's Bureau of Clean Water (BCW) reviews "BUS9O" NOIs. Under the Governor's Executive Order 2023-07 (Building Efficiency in the Commonwealth's Permitting, Licensing, and Certification Processes), DEP has 73 business days to take a final action on new PAG-07 NOIs (136 business days for out of state PAG-09 NOIs). Failure to take action within this period of time may result in a refund in the NOI fee ("PAyback").
SCOPE	This SOP applies to the review of notices of intent for residential septage that meets requirements in Chapter 271, Subchapter J. The facilities that qualify for a General Permit PAG-09 are those that can be adequately covered by general conditions that are applicable statewide. For other facilities that require additional process-specific conditions, use the Biosolids Individual Generator permit rather than the PAG-09.
ROLES AND RESPONSIBLITIES	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 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 ensuring fees are in accordance with 25 Pa. Code Chapter 271. 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*

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INTRODUCTION

This SOP describes the procedures used by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Clean Water Program will process Notices of Intent (NOIs) for new and reissuance (renewal) Beneficial Use of Residential Septage General PAG-09 permits. The authorization types covered by this SOP are “BUS9” (PAG-09 Beneficial Use of Residential Septage by Land Application, In PA) and “BUS9O” (PAG-09 Beneficial Use of Residential Septage by Land Application, Out of State). Regional offices review “BUS9” NOIs while DEP’s Bureau of Clean Water (BCW) reviews “BUS9O” NOIs.

DETAILS / PROCEDURES / STEPS

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

When PAG-09 NOIs are received, administrative staff will promptly:

A. Create the authorization (Auth) record in eFACTS

1. Select the proper Auth type code (“BUS9” or “BUS9O”) 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 NOI file.

3. Select the proper application type using the appropriate regional organization code.

4. Enter a 9-digit program-specific ID for the NOI as follows:

   - The first five digits will be "PAG09."
   - The sixth through ninth digits will be a regional designator, as follows: SERO – 0001-2199, NERO – 2201-3499, SCRO – 3501-4799, NCRO – 4801-6099, SWRO – 6101-8299, and NWRO – 8301-9899.
   - Numbers will be selected sequentially by order of authorization. Permit coverage granted for out of state generators will be issued by the sequential numbers 9901-9999.

5. Associate the proper client and site to the project/authorization. If necessary, create the client, site, client/site relationship, at least one subfacility (SF) and the primary facility (PF) Use a PF Kind of "Septage Hauler," and an SF Type of "Septage Land Application." The PF Other ID must match the program-specific ID on the application screen.

6. Enter the date the NOI 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 NOI was received.

B. Enter consultant information.

If a consultant is identified on the NOI, select the appropriate client or otherwise create the consultant as a client on the Application Screen.

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 NOI, 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 PAG-09 NOIs 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 NOI.

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

A. Review the NOI for completeness and overall technical adequacy. A complete and technically adequate NOI includes the following, not including the fee that is addressed in Step I:

1. Original NOI (signed and notarized) with 2 copies for in-state and 3 copies for out-of-state generators.

2. A topographic map identifying the facility where the residential septage processing is performed.

3. A detailed sampling plan as described in DEP's most current Biosolids Sampling Manual.

4. A description of the facility's operation and treatment used to stabilize the residential septage and meet pathogen and vector attraction reduction requirements and how the residential septage will be stored.

5. If a residual material, such as cement kiln dust, is being used to produce a biosolids product that is beneficially used, the residual materials must be authorized for beneficial use via a General Permit or be determined to be a coproduct as defined in §287.1 (referring to definitions) and meet the requirements under §287.8 (referring to coproduct determinations) or §287.9 (referring to industry-wide coproduct determinations) prior to mixing. If the residual material is approved for beneficial use via a General Permit, a copy of the General Permit authorizing the beneficial use of the residual material must be submitted with the NOI. If the residual material is considered a coproduct, then either a letter from DEP indicating concurrence with the coproduct determination or a detailed description of the residual waste to be used, its benefits to the biosolids product, and the required analyses and documentation necessary to verify the residual material meets the requirements of a coproduct must be submitted with the PAG-09 NOI.

6. For facilities located outside the Commonwealth, a copy of each permit listed in Block G (Compliance Review) of the NOI.

7. Analytical and/or process monitoring results, as appropriate, for pathogen reduction and vector attraction reduction that are used to demonstrate that the requirements for residential septage are being met.

NOTE – In general, if the applicant submits an older NOI form that is not the most current form, the application manager may deem any information that is missing a, at the application manager's discretion. If the NOI is not denied as a result, the application manager will notify the consultant or applicant that a more recent version of the NOI 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 Septage Land Application SFs listed in the NOI. Enter SF latitude and longitude.

2. Review and edit the PF latitude and longitude, using the coordinates reported on the NOI or the central point of the site.

3. Link all applicable SFs to the authorization record.

D. If none of the criteria in A.1 – 7 are found to be deficient, the application manager will proceed to Step II H. No "completeness letter" will be issued.

E. If the NOI 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 NOI 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 NOIs) or Step III G (for renewal NOIs). 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 NOI 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** NOIs, 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 NOI, for the Program Manager's signature. The template in NMS 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 NOI fee will not be returned. A new NOI fee will be required as part of a resubmission.

G. For **renewal** NOIs, 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 NMS 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 NOI is deemed complete.

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

Following completion of the Completeness Review, the application manager will conduct a detailed technical review and prepare the permit documents as follows:

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 NOI is complete.

B. Document the following on the "Administrative and Technical Review Checklist" for general biosolids permits. The technical review should be completed within 60 business days. A site visit may be conducted as needed.

   a. Verify that the pathogen reduction requirements have been met and that the correct analytical methods have been followed. New applicants will not have any pathogen reduction data. For renewals, the applicant should submit any data collected that wasn't submitted in the previous Annual Report.

   b. Verify that the vector attraction reduction requirements have been met and that the correct analytical methods have been followed. New applicants will not have any vector attraction reduction data. For renewals, the applicant should submit any data collected that wasn't submitted in the previous Annual Report.

   c. Verify that the sampling plan meets the requirements for a sample plan as indicated in the sample manual and has the correct methods and sample frequencies.

   d. Verify there is a suitable method for screening non-organic materials.

   e. Verify that the applicant is registered as a septage hauler.

   f. Verify that all laboratories used for sample testing have the appropriate certifications in Pennsylvania.

g. Conduct a compliance review for any unresolved violations in coordination with programs in DEP if necessary. This may be done by using the NMS query found at *Violations – eFACTS – Open Violations by Client by Permit No*.

C. If necessary, transmit a technical deficiency letter.

1. In the event, upon completion of Step III B, the application manager determines that additional information is required or technical problems with the NOI exist, the application manager will determine whether the identified 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 only a minimal processing delay occurs.

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 to complete the NOI. 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. All deficiencies will be identified in the TD letter with appropriate cites to the statutory and regulatory obligation that the applicant failed to meet. The Section Chief and Program Manager will review the TD letter before it is sent out. The number of TD letters will be limited to one in most circumstances. 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, proceed to Step III C.5 unless the deficiency is insignificant and can be resolved quickly.

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 technical deficiencies remain following the Elevated Review Process and the decision is to deny the NOI, 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 NOI for the Program Manager's signature. The denial will identify all deficiencies and the statutory and regulatory obligation that the applicant failed to meet. The authorization will be closed in eFACTS using the disposition code "Denied."

D. Prepare final permit coverage approval documents.

NOTE – If there are unresolved violations associated with the applicant or facility 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, approval of permit coverage 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.

1. Application managers or administrative staff will print the PAG-09 General Permit template, which can be found in the Bureau of Clean Water's Teams Biosolids Coordinators folder at: PAG-09 TEMPLATE

2. The application manager or administrative staff will develop and print a General Permit coverage approval letter.

3. The application manager or administrative staff will apply effective and expiration dates to the permit approval page.

   a. For new permits, the effective date will be the date of coverage approval 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 final authorization package will be assembled and provided to either 1) the Section Chief, for final review or 2) the Program Manager, at regions' 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 regions' 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 coverage approval date.

C. Issue the authorization in eFACTS.

D. Develop a posting for the PA Bulletin.

E. 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.

F. Transmit the case files to the regional file room.

REFERENCES

[Biosolids Sampling Manual]
[Biosolids Quality Enhancement Plan Manual]

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
IRSIS	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