

## **CITY OF ERIE & ERIE SEWER AUTHORITY COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW ABATEMENT PROGRAM**

### **Description**

On November 8, 1989, the City of Erie and the Erie Sewer authority entered into a Consent Order with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Erie agreed to attain and thereafter maintain compliance with the Clean Streams Law and any current or future National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits for the facilities under its control.

### **Background**

At the time the Consent Order was signed, there were 52 permitted overflow locations in the Erie sewer system, many of which experienced dry and wet weather overflows that discharged to the local receiving waters. Parts of the aging collection system were in poor condition and prone to infiltration and grit accumulation that contributed to overflow conditions. In addition, there were many illegal sanitary sewer connections directing untreated wastewater to the storm sewer system.

The Consent Order required Erie to determine the extent of pollutants discharged from the sewage collection system, storm sewer system, and treatment plant into the Mill Creek Tube, Presque Isle Bay, and Lake Erie and to evaluate both structural and nonstructural alternatives to reduce these pollutants. Erie was also required to submit a full and complete Act 537 Official Sewage Plan update, including flows contributed by tributary municipalities, for approval by the DEP.

In addition to the Consent Order, Erie was required to comply with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Control Policy. The Policy requires that CSO permittees undertake a process to accurately characterize their combined sewer systems and CSO discharges, demonstrate implementation of minimum technology-based controls identified in the Policy, and develop long-term CSO control plans which evaluate alternatives for attaining compliance with the Clean Water Act, including compliance with water quality standards and protection of designated uses. The City had already fulfilled many of these requirements through its efforts to comply with the Consent Order.

### **Results**

The CSO Abatement Program has met two very critical needs: mandated compliance and future planning. The Program provided compliance with the Consent Decree, compliance with the EPA CSO Control Policy, assistance in clean-up of Presque Isle Bay (designated as the 43<sup>rd</sup> Great Lakes Area of Concern), and elimination of public health and safety issues.

The results of some of these projects are already evident. Dry weather sewage bypassing no longer occurs, many illegal connections have been corrected, and basement flooding has been significantly reduced. The water quality of Presque Isle Bay has greatly improved resulting in it being designated as the first Area of Concern in the Recovery Stage on the US Great Lakes.

The City's Act 537 sewer and treatment plant improvement projects have been designed to provide sewer capacity for the ultimate population projections of the City and tributary municipalities thereby pre-empting any DEP imposed moratoriums on new sewer construction in developing areas.

The City and tributary municipalities have incurred significant costs in complying with the requirement of the Consent Decree and CSO Policy. The costs associated with engineering studies and construction is estimated to be approximately \$93 million. This does not include thousands of hours of in-house efforts by City personnel performing field investigations, lab analysis, flow monitoring activities and water sampling projects as well as the cost of equipment and supplies to support these activities.

As manufacturing jobs continue to decrease in the Erie area, the City is dependent on the waterfront to maintain and expand its tourism industry. Tourism means employment as well as tax dollars. Significant waterfront development has taken place in the past few years, including home construction, public boat launches, fishing areas, public walkways, as well as marinas and restaurants. The City's CSO Abatement Program has been vital to the improvement of the water quality of Presque Isle Bay and the success of waterfront development.

### **Project Contact**

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