

## NPDES

By Mike Lucas, Wastewater Technician

One of the issues that I notice across the state is wastewater operators that don't have a copy of their system's NPDES Permit. Operators should have access to a current copy of their permit and be very familiar with it.

Permits are frequently changed when they are renewed. NDEQ has started notifying the system of permit changes and that certainly helps as long as the operator also receives them. Don't just assume that there are no changes. Also, don't think that your permit is the same as all other towns because it probably isn't. I have seen differences in discharge limits between neighboring towns discharging into the same receiving waters. Over the years, I have seen many changes in loading limits (kg/day), concentration limits (mg/l), sampling, different seasonal limits, report only parameters, etc.

One very astute operator that I recently visited with knew his permit inside and out. He had taken the certification test to upgrade his license to a higher grade. He challenged the answer to one of the test questions that dealt with sampling because it differed from his permit. NDEQ deserves a lot of credit for researching other permits and finding several others like his. Ultimately, they threw out the question which made the difference between him passing or not passing. I've known that to happen on a couple of instances. Years ago, I was advised, "Try to know more about your permit than the regulator does."