



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UPDATE: Tropical Storm Helene impacting sewer service in Oconee County

SENECA, S.C. – The Oconee County Joint Regional Sewer Authority (OJRSA) continues to monitor the aftermath of the unprecedented storms that affected our region.

We thank all the utilities, our partners, and local and state agencies that have assisted us directly or indirectly with our mitigation efforts. We pray for the safety of all those who are going above and beyond for our neighbors and community and we're thankful for all who are selflessly providing service to others, no matter how big or small.

As of 5:00 pm Saturday, September 28:

- The treatment plant continues to operate with no issues and is now considered to be operating in “normal status.” We are meeting all effluent discharge parameters as stated within our permit. The current discharge flow rate is 5,070 gallons per minute (7.3 million gallons per day).
- There are two known overflows at this time:
 - One is upstream of the Duck Pond Pump Station, located near the Oconee County Rock Quarry. The internal pressure within the gravity sewer appeared to damage one of the manhole structures; however, until the water level in Duck Pond Reservoir recedes, we will not be able to make the necessary repair.
 - The other is upstream of the Choestoea Pump Station near Dr. Johns Road. This is due to the station being without power and the transfer switch associated with the generator being damaged. Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative is currently onsite making repairs, so hopefully this station will have utility power soon.
- There are still 12 pump stations (out of 16) that do not have utility power at this time; however, 8 are operating on generator power and the other 4 are stations have very low wastewater flow coming to them. It is possible that there are overflows associated with the 4 stations with no power source but we have not observed any during our field inspections.
- We are slowly drawing down on some of the flow that has been stored at the treatment plant. This is a slow process as we have to incorporate it into the wastewater we are receiving from the system and it will take several days to completely remove and treat this water.
- A crew came in and began inspecting the rights-of-way. There were no overflows observed in the portion of the system located southwest of Seneca towards Westminster but there were a lot of trees down that hindered our ability to proceed. The streambanks and creek crossings appeared to be in decent shape and there were no obvious signs that any of our pipelines were at risk of collapse due to erosion, which is somewhat of an unexpected surprise given the amount of rain that we received.

- Samples were taken of creek water upstream of a sewer spill and actual wastewater directly from a spill site and compared to one another. The results indicated what we expected—the bacteria levels in the wastewater were identical to the stormwater, meaning that the untreated wastewater that overflowed was essentially equal to the same water that would have been found in a storm drain on any street at that time.
- We will continue looking at the collection system (gravity sewer and pump stations) on Sunday.
- The following advisories and requests shall continue to remain in place for the foreseeable future:
 - If customers observe an overflow, they should avoid the area and notify the OJRSA by calling 864-972-3900.
 - People and pets should avoid all floodwaters and waterbodies in the area due to potential wastewater contamination or other hazards until the notice is rescinded.

About the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority:

The Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority (OJRSA) is a governmental agency providing wastewater treatment service to the cities of Seneca, Walhalla, Westminster, the town of West Union and their surrounding areas. Learn more at www.ojrja.org.

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