

## **Unincorporated MS4 Areas in Richland County Earn Compliance**

### *What is MS4?*

MS4 is short for "Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System", where the word "Municipal" refers to a unit of local government like a county or a township that has a portion that has been designated as an "urbanized area" (as determined by population density collected by the US Census Bureau, which are communities that have 1000 or more people per square mile), and the number 4 refers to the four words that start with the letter "S"; "Separate," "Storm," "Sewer," "System." A separate storm sewer system includes retention basins, ditches, roadside inlets, and underground pipes which are designed to collect stormwater and discharge it without treatment into local streams and rivers. It's called a separate system because it's not connected to the sanitary sewer system, which drains wastewater from inside a home to a sewage treatment facility or a private septic system where the wastewater can be treated.

### *NPDES Permit*

In addition to requirements Richland County landowners follow for earthmoving activities through the Richland County Stormwater and Erosion Control Program, MS4 communities must follow the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to legally discharge stormwater into local stream and rivers through what is called an "NPDES" permit. The word "National" references the connection with the Federal Clean Water Act, and the word "Discharge" refers to the fact that these separate storm sewer systems eventually release untreated stormwater into local creeks, rivers, and lakes. These NPDES permits are also commonly called, "MS4 Permits" or "Stormwater Permits."

The NPDES (Phase 2) communities in Richland County are: **Richland County Commissioners**, City of Mansfield, City of Ontario, Village of Lexington, Madison Township, Mifflin Township, Springfield Township and Washington Township. Richland County Commissioners and the 4 townships have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD), which fulfills the role to comply in these communities with the federal mandates under the Clean Water Act.

### *Stormwater Management Plan and Minimum Control Measures*

To meet the terms of their NPDES Permit, communities need to develop what's called a "Stormwater Management Program" (SWMP) that has six focus areas that the Environmental Protection Agency considers essential for success, called Minimum Control Measures or "MCMs":

#### *1. Public Education and Outreach*

MS4 communities must develop community-wide education plans designed to inform residents about what stormwater is, why it requires management, and things they can do to make a difference.

#### *2. Public Participation and Involvement*

MS4 communities must find ways to involve the public in stormwater related activities including taking actions that improve stormwater at home, work and in the community.

3. *Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination*

MS4 communities must identify and eliminate polluted discharges and spills, which includes septic tank drainage, laundry wash water, paint, automobile oil, grease from restaurant grease traps, and sanitary waste among other things.

4. *Construction Site Erosion Control*

Poorly managed construction sites can be a major source of polluted stormwater so MS4 communities are required to reduce this risk through procedures to make sure erosion and sediment control practices are installed correctly and maintained as long as needed.

5. *Post Construction Stormwater Management*

MS4 communities must ensure new buildings, parking lots and other developments don't create future stormwater problems through the installation of structural stormwater management practices that are maintained properly after construction.

6. *Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping*

MS4 communities must reduce stormwater pollution from their own maintenance yards, streets, parking lots, buildings, and other facilities.

### *Notice of Violation*

On September 13, 2018, the Ohio EPA issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) to Richland County regarding 7 violations for the MS4 program. The violations were for the following items:

1. An updated Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP) including the measurable goals for each of the 6 Minimum Control Measures. (Violation #1 and #2)
2. The completion dates and schedule for the dry weather screening with a set schedule of priorities. (Violation #3)
3. Education program that includes 5 different messages with 1 theme for the development community and a target of 50% of the population over 5 years (2023) (Violation #4)
4. The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWP3) for all county and township facilities (Violation #5)
5. Documentation of construction site inspections conducted monthly with written record, violation letter/enforcement actions taken if needed (Violation #6)
6. The development of long-term Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of post-construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) in the MS4 area including pre-construction SWP3 review, inspection of the BMPs, and the development of O&M plans and agreements. (Violation #7).

### *Corrective Actions Taken*

Since receiving the NOV letter, a number of actions were taken by RSWCD to address the violations.

- At the time that Richland County received the NOV letter in September of 2018, RSWCD office had only 1 technician and his primary responsibility was fulfilling the role as "Stormwater Manager" for the Richland County Stormwater Program in the unincorporated areas of Richland County, per the Richland County Sediment and Erosion Control Regulations. RSWCD hired a new Director in November of 2018, and shortly after was able to hire a new technician in January 2019 with generous funding for this position provided by both Richland County Commissioners and the 4 MS4 townships. Having a technician that can dedicate time to the MS4 program has significantly helped Richland County to be able to catch up and address the MS4 violations noted in the EPA letter.

Additionally, the Richland County Foundation generously funded several interns in the office over the last 3 years that have helped with MS4 activities.

- A new SWMP was developed for Richland County that includes measurable goals for each of the 6 Minimum Control Measures.
- The stormwater system in the MS4 areas (Madison, Mifflin, Springfield and Washington Townships and the specific roads owned or maintained by Richland County within those four townships) was mapped out and digitized, and 204 MS4 outfalls were located. RSWCD screens 41 outfalls each year to have all outfalls screened every 5 years. RSWCD has located eight potential illicit discharges since conducting dry weather inspections and they were turned over to the Richland Public Health District for further investigation.
- The Education programs have been expanded for RSWCD to partner with Richland County Solid Waste, City of Ontario and the City of Mansfield to coordinate the annual messaging and programs. RSWCD participates in many community activities like the Richland Business Expo and the Mid-Ohio Home Show, Richland County Fair and Belville Street Fair, and other activities to meet MS4 requirements. RSWCD is partnering with the Mansfield Richland County Public Library to offer beginning rain barrel workshops in May. Richland County is participating in Stormwater Awareness Week from October 16 – October 22, and the county and municipalities are asked to adopt proclamations to honor it.
- SWPPP plans were developed for the four MS4 township Road Departments and the Richland County Highway garage. Salt is one of the focal points as a possible pollutant, and the total amount of salt used by the Richland County Highway Department and the four MS4 Townships was 5754 tons in 2021 and 4240 tons in 2020.
- Documentation is completed for each commercial construction site inspection. In 2021 RSWCD completed a total of 60 commercial site inspections and 58 will be completed by the end of April. In 2021 RSWCD investigated 2 construction storm water complaints received from citizens and 2 complaints the Ohio EPA received, one for a noxious smell and the other for a construction site complaint. RSWCD reviewed a total of 20 new commercial site plans in 2021. It is a new requirement for long term post construction agreements for the property owner to maintain the structure in perpetuity.

	Washington Twp.	Springfield Twp	Madison Twp	Mifflin Twp
Inlet	226	151	1137	473
Storm Drain Inlet	66	16	54	57
Catch Basin	76	98	583	167
Outlet	3	1	161	37
Manhole	3	4	5	0
Other/Undefined	5	4	8	5
Outfall	34	24	117	29
Non MS4 Outfall	62	32	65	0
Blockages	8	6	7	0
Other/Undefined	23	18	37	6

RSWCD was asked to provide monthly updates to Ohio EPA on the progress toward those 7 items, in addition to an Annual Plan submitted each year. On March 11, 2022, RSWCD received an email from the Ohio EPA stating the previous violations have been resolved, compliance has been achieved, and monthly updates are no longer required. To celebrate this accomplishment, a celebration is being held on May 4 for public officials involved in making the compliance possible.

For more information on the MS4 program, please visit <https://richlandswcd.net/services/npdes>, call 419-747-8077 or email [Herrold.dan@richlandswcd.net](mailto:Herrold.dan@richlandswcd.net)

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