

HARRIS COUNTY
PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEPARTMENT

1001 Preston, 5th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002
(713) 755-4400

April 2, 2008

Commissioners Court
Administration Building
Houston, Texas 77002


Vote of the Court:	Yes	No	Abstain
Judge Emmett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Lee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Garcia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Radack	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Eversole	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUBJECT: Recommendation that Commissioners Court adopt the "Water & Wastewater Regionalization Policy for Harris County and Harris County Flood Control District" effective May 1, 2008.

Dear Court Members:

It is recommended that Commissioners Court adopt the "Water & Wastewater Regionalization Policy for Harris County and Harris County Flood Control District" effective May 1, 2008. As authorized by Commissioners Court on November 6, 2007, a task group was formed to create the policy with representatives from Public Infrastructure, Management Services, Community Services Department, and Public Health & Environmental Services. The resulting policy is attached.

The policy was developed to affirm and clarify Harris County and Harris County Flood Control District's position on the issue of water and wastewater regionalization. Through this policy, the County and the District anticipate a reduction in the number of water and wastewater treatment plants and a reduction in pollutant loads to waterways. This policy also falls within guidance provided by the Environmental Protection Agency for compliance with the County and the District's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System storm water permit.

Sincerely,

Arthur L. Storey, Jr., P.E.
Executive Director

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HARRIS COUNTY
MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Attachment

- cc: Dr. Richard Raycraft- Management Services
- David Turkel- Community Services Department
- Dr. Herminia Palacio, M.D., M.P.H.- Public Health & Environmental Services
- Bud Karachiwalla- PHES Environmental Public Health
- John Blount, P.E.- PID Planning & Operations
- Mike Talbott, P.E.- PID Flood Control District
- Deborah Vaughn, P.E.- PID Architecture & Engineering
- Alisa Max, P.E.- PID Planning & Operations WPG

Presented to Commissioner's Court

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WATER & WASTEWATER REGIONALIZATION POLICY FOR HARRIS COUNTY AND HARRIS COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT

Purpose - Harris County and Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) have developed this policy to affirm their position on the issue of water and wastewater regionalization and to establish guidelines for achieving regionalization. With this policy the County and HCFCD anticipate a reduction in the number of water treatment plants and wastewater treatment plants and a reduction in pollutant loads to waterways by planning or participating in larger and/ or more efficient wastewater systems.

Scope – This policy applies to water systems and wastewater systems 1) owned or operated by Harris County and/or HCFCD and 2) funded in full or in part by Harris County, HCFCD, or other grant funds administered by or received by Harris County or HCFCD.

Overview –

Harris County and HCFCD recognize that water and wastewater regionalization, when properly applied, have the following advantages:

- improved treatment efficiency;
- improved unit cost for treatment;
- reduced number of wastewater discharges;
- reduced groundwater extraction;
- reduced liability from regulatory oversight, permitting, fines;
- improved water quality resulting from improved treatment; and
- reduced overall maintenance costs.

As owners of several water and wastewater systems, as a regulatory oversight agency for public and private water and wastewater systems, and as environmental stewards of the county's natural environment, Harris County and HCFCD recognize the manifold benefits to regionalization of water and wastewater systems and hereby affirm their commitment to the concept of water and wastewater regionalization.

Definitions –

1. Consolidation of Water and/ or Wastewater Systems- the merger of two or more previously independent water and/ or wastewater systems into one system resulting in one treatment plant.
2. County Engineer – the holder of the statutory office of the County Engineer for Harris County or the employee designated by the County Engineer to perform a task required by this policy.
3. Regionalization of Water and/ or Wastewater - the consolidation of water and/or wastewater systems such that the resulting treatment facilities are regional.
4. Regionalization Planning – the concept of planning of water and/or wastewater systems to meet regionalization thresholds for the receiving treatment plants.

5. Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant – a wastewater treatment plant that serves a region requiring a minimum of 3 mgd capacity.
6. Wastewater – waterborne human waste, or waste from domestic activities, such as washing, bathing, and food preparation.
7. Wastewater System – the infrastructure used for the collection, treatment, and disposal of wastewater.
8. Water System – the infrastructure used for the development, treatment, and distribution of potable water.

Policy –

A. Water Systems

Harris County and HCFCD support and pledge to follow *District Regulatory Plan 1999* adopted by the Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District on April 14, 1999, amended September 12, 2001, and as will from time to time be subsequently amended.

B. Wastewater Systems

1. Existing Wastewater systems owned or operated by Harris County and/or HCFCD- Regionalization

Within 18 months of the adoption of this policy by Harris County Commissioners Court, the County Engineer will perform a review of Harris County and HCFCD's existing wastewater systems in order to determine the feasibility of regionalization planning. Consolidation of two systems or conversion to an on-site system, even if it does not meet regionalization thresholds, will be considered as a step towards regionalization and is encouraged. If the County Engineer determines that regionalization of any Harris County or HCFCD owned or operated wastewater systems is feasible, the County Engineer will begin the process to regionalize those systems in a systematic and cost-effective manner. Feasibility will be determined by:

- a. Cost of conveyance to the nearest available system. If the cost of laying new wastewater lines to convey the wastewater to the nearest available system is determined to be greater than 150% of construction and lifecycle costs, then regionalization in this instance shall be considered not feasible.
- b. Impact to areas of historical/cultural significance, environmentally-sensitive areas, or highly-developed areas. If laying wastewater lines to divert wastewater from an existing system into a consolidated or regional system will cause undue disruption in any of these areas, regionalization in this instance may be considered not feasible at the discretion of the County Engineer.

2. Existing Wastewater Systems owned or operated by Harris County and/or HCFCD- On-Site Considerations

As part of the County Engineer's review of existing County or HCFCD owned or operated wastewater systems, the County Engineer will further analyze any existing wastewater systems that are not candidates for regionalization or

consolidation to determine the applicability of transitioning all or part of the wastewater system to a decentralized, on-site wastewater facility. The proposal to change all or part of a system to a decentralized, on-site wastewater facility should be based on both economics and environmental stewardship.

3. *Future County or HCFCD Owned or Operated Wastewater Systems*

Any project developed in the future by Harris County or by HCFCD which is anticipated to generate more wastewater than can be effectively treated with on-site sewage facilities will be required to analyze the feasibility of regionalization, or at a minimum, consolidation, of the discharge. Feasibility will be determined using the criteria established in Items 1a- 1b above.

4. *Harris County and/or HCFCD Grant Funded Projects*

Any proposal for significant work related to a wastewater system modification funded in full or in part by Harris County or HCFCD or other grant funds administered by or received by Harris County or HCFCD must provide evidence of due deliberation for regionalization of the wastewater system. If regionalization is not feasible using the criteria stated in Items 1a- 1b above, consolidation of the wastewater system and change to on-site treatment must also be considered. In instances where Harris County or HCFCD is involved in the grant applicant scoring process, the scoring will be strongly dependent on the applicant's deliberation for wastewater regionalization, wastewater consolidation, and/ or decentralized on-site wastewater treatment.

In instances where Harris County or HCFCD is involved in the grant applicant scoring process, grant proposals which give consideration within the scope of the project to future upgrades that will allow for regionalization of nearby non-regional systems will receive extra scoring consideration, assuming the grant allows for such planning and the project conditions are applicable.

5. *Non-Regional Wastewater Treatment Plants*

If the County Engineer determines that, for one or more of the reasons listed above, the project is not a candidate for regionalization, the following additional wastewater effluent limitations and provisions shall apply to the system within three years of adoption of this policy or within three years following the subsequent renewal of the wastewater treatment plant Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) permit, whichever is later.

- a. Tertiary wastewater treatment for solids removal (e.g., sand filter, membrane filter) must be added to the treatment train;
- b. A bacteria effluent monitoring program approved by the County Engineer must be developed and administered;
- c. Any facility accepting restaurant waste must have grease trap(s) constructed in accordance with a plan approved by the County Engineer and maintain the grease trap(s) in accordance with a plan approved by the County Engineer; and

- d. The non-regional wastewater treatment plant must include a SCADA system installed and utilized in a manner approved by the County Engineer.