



For immediate release:

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For more information, contact:

Robert Goulding, DPW Public Information Manager
802-540-0846

August 11, 2020 Main Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge, Upcoming Steps to Create a More Resilient System

Last night (8/11/2020), Burlington's Main Wastewater Treatment Plant switched over to backup power due to a power outage in Burlington during the massive thunderstorm. While backup power did turn on, disinfection pumps for the combined portion of the flow did not immediately start. Operators were on-site to diagnose and fix this issue. However, this did lead to an approximately 13 minute period in which treated but not fully disinfected combined flow (a majority of which is stormwater) discharged from the Plant. The total volume was between 1M-1.5M gallons of stormwater flow with a smaller wastewater fraction. This may lead to higher bacteria levels in nearby water. Due to proximity and in accordance with state law, we posted signs this morning advising against contact recreation (e.g., swimming) at Oakledge Cove, Blanchard Beach, Blodgett Access and Perkins Pier for 48 hours. We also issued a VT-Alert at 8:25AM. Sign up for VT-Alert at burlingtonvt.gov/btv-alerts.

Upcoming work to create a more resilient system

Due to overwhelming support of Burlingtonians in November 2018, the City gained approval for the \$30 million dollar Clean Water Resiliency Plan (CWRP). At the heart of this Plan was an effort to upgrade end-of-life equipment at the wastewater treatment plants. We recently signed a notice to proceed with a contractor to begin a \$2.6M upgrade to the disinfection systems at the plants this season. Other upgrades to the computer control system at Main Plant are also planned for 2020. These projects will greatly enhance the resiliency of the wastewater treatment system.

Another component of the CWRP includes building green stormwater infrastructure into our streetscape. Planning and engagement are underway for 12 projects in the South End and Old North

End. These projects will slow storm flows to our combined system and filter out pollutants - including to our most vexing combined sewer overflow point at Pine St.

Each of Burlington's WWTPs has a disinfection system that provides chemical treatment to ensure bacteria levels in the plant's effluent remain low. Some of this equipment dates back to the last major overhaul of the treatment plants in 1994 – when nearly 170M gallons of un-disinfected, untreated wastewater was still being emptied annually into Lake Champlain. We have advanced these projects through the State Revolving Fund which added time and extra steps, but kept costs down for the ratepayer.

Continuing to build on recent advances

We are actively continuing the progress of the last few years in upgrading aging infrastructure and building green stormwater into our streetscape. Beaches should never be closed in Burlington, but unlike a generation ago they are no longer closed for weeks or seasons at a time. We will continue this generation's stewardship and progress in advancing water quality. Projects like the raingardens on St. Paul Street and Mansfield Avenue; and the subsurface system installed on Allen St - all installed in 2019 -- go a long way to reducing storm flows and filtering out pollutants before they reach the Plant. While more intense storms have become the new normal with a changing climate, we will continue building resilient infrastructure and building on the undeniable progress Burlington has made. More information on the Clean Water Resiliency Plan can be found at: <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPW/Water/CWRP>.

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