



June 9, 2026

Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Courthouse, Room 201
901 N. 9th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53233

Dear Supervisors Eckblad, Shea, Gómez-Tom, Capriolo, Martin, Martinez, Vincent, Bielinski, Rolland and the entire Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors:

We are writing in response to your May 18, 2026, communication calling for an independent audit of Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's (MMSD) wastewater treatment facilities managed by Veolia Water Milwaukee.

As the 11-member Commission charged with establishing and enforcing the policies that oversee MMSD, we have long shared your expectation that our community's wastewater management operates with the highest standards and professionalism in full transparency with our community.

On June 8, 2026, the Commission voted to authorize an independent third party audit of complaints regarding the performance of wastewater management in Milwaukee. With yesterday's vote, the Commission will begin evaluating qualified firms to perform the audit and will work to appoint an independent advisory committee to oversee the audit.

No members of MMSD management will be involved in the audit, other than to provide administrative support, answer specific questions or provide specific information to the auditors.

For context, it is important to understand that for more than 25 years, MMSD has relied on a private company to operate and maintain our regional wastewater facilities. While the contracts have evolved to meet the region's needs, accountability, transparency, and public reporting have remained central to the process.

The current procurement process for our next private operator contract began in 2024 with a request for qualifications. In September 2025, MMSD issued a request for proposals, which were submitted at the end of January (by Veolia Water Milwaukee and Jacobs Solutions). Those proposals are currently under review and will be scored by an ad hoc selection committee made up of five former MMSD Commissioners.

Despite the public nature of this procurement process, it was only earlier this year that concerns were raised by Common Ground and, through them, a former MMSD employee and a former Veolia employee. We are disappointed that these concerns – some of which apparently date back to 2016 – were not raised earlier.

Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

260 W. Seeboth Street, Milwaukee, WI 53204-1446

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As stewards for your constituents, we wanted to share the following additional information that you may find helpful.

- MMSD's performance is regularly monitored by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as well as the Environmental Protection Agency.
- MMSD has captured and cleaned 98.4% of all wastewaters in the service area since 1994, far exceeding the common national benchmark of 85%.
- Since the Deep Tunnel System came online in 1993, overflows per year have dropped to an average of 2.2 compared to 50 or 60 or overflow events that used to be common. The reduction in overflows is one of Milwaukee's biggest turnaround stories over the past 30 years.
- While there are limits to any facility's capacity, for MMSD, overflows are a rare event and largely due to the intensity of extreme storms, not regular operations. For example, the past two recorded overflows – in April 2026 and August 2025 – were the direct result of historic level storms. Over five days this past April, rainfall was measured at 7.31 inches, a 100-year storm level that stressed the system's design capacity. Record breaking rainfall in August 2025 became one of the most extreme rainfall events in our region's history. No infrastructure would have been able to manage that amount of rain.
- Despite this, decades of flood management investments have protected many neighborhoods that previously would have been under direct threat from storms like these.
- Treated wastewater that is discharged into Lake Michigan exceeds state requirements for cleanliness. In general, the performance standards that guide MMSD's contract with Veolia are far more stringent than what our permits require.
- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources measures the performance and compliance of wastewater treatment systems through its Compliance Maintenance Annual Report (CMAR). From 2014 through 2025, the average CMAR score was 3.99 for our Jones Island facility and 3.88 for our South Shore facility (on a 4.0 scale). These are some of the highest scores in the state.

While we are proud of our region's wastewater management effort and results, continuous improvement is necessary as facilities age, weather patterns change, and our region grows. The District's 10-year investment plan, which was approved last year, calls for \$2.1 billion in improvements to regional water reclamation facilities and sewers to further reduce the risk of future overflows and basement backups. Our expectation is that the independent third-party audit, once complete, will serve as further guide to our continuous improvement work.

Sincerely,

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District Commission
Commission Chair Corey Zetts, Executive Director, Menomonee Valley Partners
Commission Vice Chair Bryan Kennedy, Mayor, City of Glendale
Commissioner JoAnna Bautch, Executive Director, VIA CDC
Commissioner Dan Bukiewicz, Mayor, City of Oak Creek
Commissioner Mark Chambers, Jr., Milwaukee Alderman
Commissioner Milele A. Coggs, Milwaukee Alderwoman
Commissioner Dan Devine, Mayor, City of West Allis
Commissioner Kalan Haywood, II, State Representative
Commissioner José Ramón Ramírez, LiUNA! Local No. 113
Commissioner Julia Taylor, Citizen Member
Commissioner Jeff Stone, Senior Consultant, Kapur & Associates