



Duckworth, Durbin Call on EPA to Assist Cahokia Heights in Returning to Compliance With Clean Water Act

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Chair of the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water and Wildlife, and U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) are calling on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help the sewer utility that serves Cahokia Heights, Illinois, return to compliance with the Clean Water Act. In April, EPA issued a notice of potential violation letter to the Commonfields of Cahokia Public Water District

after inspectors observed sanitary sewer overflows and operational deficiencies of the sanitary sewer systems. For years, area residents have lived with overflowing sewage in their yards and homes, posing a public health threat. Duckworth and Durbin are working with residents to help repair and rebuild this system, and are calling on EPA to avoid all enforcement options that could further burden residents financially.

“We understand that if EPA ultimately determines that Commonfields Public Water District was not in compliance with applicable requirements, EPA will consider enforcement options available under the Clean Water Act, which could include the issuance of an administrative compliance order, issuance of an administrative penalty order and pursuing a judicial civil or criminal action,” the Senators wrote. “It is our hope that while EPA considers these enforcement options, every effort to avoid further financial burden and suffering being passed to the residents of Cahokia Heights be taken.”

Residents recently voted to dissolve the Commonfields of Cahokia Public Water District as part of a consolidation of Centreville, Alorton and Cahokia municipalities into one joint municipality, Cahokia Heights. The new Cahokia Heights sewer department will be in charge of the utility.

Duckworth and Durbin have been strong advocates for bringing environmental justice to Centreville, calling on EPA to conduct enhanced monitoring and enforcement of the area, and working to provide federal funding to repair the failing water system. Duckworth and Durbin have visited Centreville to meet with local residents who have been impacted by the persistent inland flooding and the environmental justice issues the community faces. Duckworth is the chair and co-founder of the U.S. Senate Environmental Justice Caucus, of which Durbin is also a member.

Full text of the letter is available [here](#) and below.

Dear Administrator Regan:

We write to discuss the next steps necessary to assist Commonfields of Cahokia Public Water District in returning to compliance with the Clean Water Act. On April 30, 2021, EPA issued a notice of potential violation letter to the Commonfields of Cahokia Public Water District after EPA inspectors observed sanitary sewer overflows and serious operations-and-maintenance deficiencies of the sanitary sewer systems. After years of the citizens of this district suffering as a result of this dilapidated system, we want to ensure that any opportunities that exist to help the Commonfields of Cahokia Public Water District with funding sources and technical assistance in order to come into compliance are promptly identified and utilized.

It is important that EPA take into account that the residents of Centreville, Alorton and Cahokia recently voted to consolidate into one municipality called Cahokia Heights. The residents also approved dissolving the sewer utility Commonfields of Cahokia, putting the new Cahokia Heights sewer department in charge of the utility. It is our understanding that the new city of Cahokia Heights was officially founded on May 6, 2021, and that it has agreed to assume all past liabilities of Commonfields of Cahokia Public Water District and all future efforts to help these systems achieve compliance. Therefore, we would also appreciate EPA's full consideration of the newly formed municipal government's current needs and capabilities as you review compliance options.

We understand that if EPA ultimately determines that Commonfields Public Water District was not in compliance with applicable requirements, EPA will consider enforcement options available under the Clean Water Act, which could include the issuance of an administrative compliance order, issuance of an administrative penalty order and pursuing a judicial civil or criminal action. It is our hope that while EPA considers these enforcement options, every effort to avoid further financial burden and suffering being passed to the residents of Cahokia Heights be taken. We strongly support frequent and robust community engagement throughout this process to ensure that the identified solutions assist in meeting the needs of the residents.

In EPA's process of identifying and assisting Cahokia Heights with funding options, technical assistance or pursuance of compliance methods please free to use our staff as a resource to assist in any way possible.