



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Environmental groups push for an end to illegal sanitary sewer overflows

Milwaukee, WI – Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers and the Alliance for the Great Lakes seek to end continued illegal sanitary sewer overflows into Milwaukee's rivers and Lake Michigan. Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers and Alliance for the Great Lakes have appealed a recent dismissal of their Clean Water Act lawsuit to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. The U.S. District Court dismissed the groups' suit on procedural grounds without addressing the groups' legal claims that there have been serious violations of the Clean Water Act.

The groups, in a suit first initiated in 2001, claim that the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District illegally dumped nearly a billion gallons of sanitary sewage into Lake Michigan and its tributaries since 1995, violating its operating permit and the Clean Water Act.

Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers and Alliance for the Great Lakes, seek an end to sanitary sewer overflows, enforced with penalties for any future violations of the operating permit. They also seek a focused effort to reduce 'infiltration and inflow' flowing into the sewerage system, unnecessarily burdening sewerage treatment capacity, as well as operational and management improvements to eliminate sanitary sewer overflows.

"As long as sewage is flowing into the waters we all love, we'll continue to be on watch," said Cheryl Nenn, Milwaukee Riverkeeper for Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers.

Karen Schapiro, Executive Director of Midwest Environmental Advocates and one of the attorneys working on the case on a pro bono basis added, "The Court of Appeals has previously reversed the lower court in this case. We think the writing is on the wall and at the end of the day the Sewerage District will be held responsible for its continual violations of the Clean Water Act."

FAST FACTS

- On December 14, 2007, Judge Clevert of the U.S. District Court handed down his decision to dismiss the case, on the grounds that the matter had already been decided by a previous settlement between the DNR and MMSD.
- MMSD continues to violate sanitary sewage overflow requirements, dumping more than 500 million gallons of sanitary sewage illegally since 2002.
- Alliance for the Great Lakes is a non-profit organization that works to conserve and restore the world's largest freshwater resource using policy, education and local efforts, ensuring a healthy Great Lakes and clean water for generations of people and wildlife. See www.greatlakes.org for more information.
- Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers (FMR) is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting water quality and wildlife habitat and advocating for sound land use in the Milwaukee River Basin. FMR is a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, an international coalition working to protect and restore the world's waterways, and is the licensed Riverkeeper® for Milwaukee. See www.mkeriverkeeper.org for more information.
- Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc. (MEA) is a non-profit environmental law center working to protect the public's right to clean air, clean water, clean government, and responsible land use. See www.midwestadvocates.org for more information.