

MOBILE COMPLETES ALL WORK REQUIRED UNDER A 2002 CONSENT DECREE TO ADDRESS SEWER PROBLEMS
SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS WITHIN THE MOBILE BAY AREA EXPECTED AS A RESULT

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(Atlanta, Ga. – Nov. 15, 2011) – Mobile, Ala., has completed all work required under a 2002 consent decree resolving the city's violations of the Clean Water Act and Alabama Water Pollution Control Act. The city's Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners (Board) has paid the original \$99,000 (federal) and \$15,000 (state) civil penalties, as well as stipulated penalties totaling \$476,000, and implemented related environmental projects valued at an additional \$2.5 million. As a result, on October 25, 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a notice of termination of the Consent Decree with the U.S. District Court.

Alabama and Mobile Bay Watch, Inc. (known as Mobile Baykeeper) were co-plaintiffs with the United States in the case and resulting consent decree against the Board. This action marks a significant accomplishment for the Board, and will result in long-term environmental and public health benefits for the Mobile Bay area. This is also the first major Clean Water Act consent decree involving a municipal sewer system to be terminated within Region 4 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Under the consent decree, the Board was required to develop and implement numerous Management, Operations and Maintenance (MOM) programs to address the Clean Water Act violations cited. These include programs to ensure adequate sewer capacity; address operational and maintenance failures; control corrosion and grease in the sewer pipes; ensure proper reporting and public notification of sewer spills; prepare contingency plans for emergency situations; and monitor the water quality in the creeks and rivers within the Board's service area. EPA estimates the Board has reduced its raw sewage discharges to surface waters by over 2.8 million gallons per year since implementing the programs, substantially reducing contamination and the risk to public health.

The Board also completed four supplemental environmental projects (SEPs) as required under the consent decree. Two of these SEPs funded purchases of environmentally valuable habitats in Mobile County, under the Alabama Forever Wild program, and within the Dog River watershed. One project supported the repair of private residential service laterals in low-income areas. The final SEP provided partial funding for the publicly-available Mobile Bay area water quality monitoring database.

The Board owns and operates two wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs), which discharge treated wastewater into Mobile Bay and its tributary, Three Mile Creek, as well as the transmission and collection systems that carry wastewater to the WWTPs for treatment. The 2002 consent decree resolved violations of both the Clean Water Act and the Alabama Water Pollution Control Act dating back to 1993.

Specifically, the Board was cited for exceeding the effluent limits outlined in its WWTPs' National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits, as well sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) from the Board's wastewater collection and transmission systems. SSOs like these pose a significant threat to public health and the environment, and remain a leading cause of water quality impairment. SSOs contain raw sewage and have high concentrations of bacteria from fecal contamination, as well as disease-causing pathogens and viruses.