



July 8, 2024

David Pfeiffer, Chair

Capital Area Regional Planning Commission

Subject: Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) to stop the discharge of its effluent to Badger Mill Creek

Dear Chair Pfeiffer,

The Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited (SWTU) respectfully requests the the Capital Area Planning Commission (CARPC) recommend that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) disapprove of the amendment to the Area-wide Water Quality Plan requested by MMSD. This amendment would allow MMSD to discontinue the discharge of highly treated and aerated effluent to Badger Mill Creek (BMC).

Over the last 25 years SWTU has spent hundreds of volunteer hours and thousands of dollars to preserve and improve BMC. Those years of dedication in combination with the efforts of riparian landowners, other conservation organizations, and local governments. have transformed BMC into a healthy, improving trout stream. The stream anchors a corridor with other restored natural features, a variety of wildlife and opportunities for a variety of outdoor activities. Such a resource in Wisconsin's most rapidly growing metropolitan area should be cherished and not damaged.

MMSD's proposal would damage the creek. It is a) unnecessary and b) unjustified.

a) MMSD can comply with its phosphorus reduction requirement by tertiary treatment or adaptive management in the BCM and upper Sugar River watersheds.

b) The amendment authorizing the discharge was carefully studied and debated. The debate did not center in the return of water to the Sugar River watershed but on the effects on BMC. Local officials, public managers, and conservationists agreed this was a worthwhile experiment. The results are indisputably successful. A recent DNR assessment of BMC and a detailed review of its history by DNR fish and water quality biologists demonstrate that BMC is a healthy, improving Class 2 trout stream and that the effluent plays a vital role in that sustained improvement (significantly more than the increased baseflow cited by MMSD). Stopping that water will almost

certainly hurt the creek. The DNR noted that the upper portion of BMC which now supports trout and has had over \$200,000 of stream improvement implemented, might well only support warmwater forage fish.

The amendment made one of the best water quality and fish habitat improvements in this part of Wisconsin possible. It should not be changed to degrade BMC.

One way to understand the purpose of the amendment and its success is to remember that the transfer of water was to address the possible depletion of groundwater because of development. One manifestation of groundwater is springs, the lifeblood of trout streams in southern Wisconsin. As the DNR biologists point out, the effluent has some of the key characteristics of a giant spring; the reason it has benefitted BMC to such a high degree. MMSD's analysis of the effects of its action on BMC misses this key point entirely. One benefit of large springs is that they mitigate the effects of extremely cold temperatures in the winter. The warmer spring water prevents anchor ice from forming, which can devastate trout redds. While the effluent's temperatures are not the same as a spring, they do not hurt BMC in the summer and help in the other three seasons.

As noted, MMSD has overstated the effects of increase baseflow on BMC and refuses to recognize the essential contribution its effluent makes to the improved and stable health of BMC. Moreover, it also fails to account for the varying and worsening effects of accelerating climate change. Climate change will not result in a benign increase in precipitation in this area. More droughts will occur as happened over most of the last two years. Some of the precipitation will occur in intense downpours or extended periods of heavy rain. This will cause destructive floods and massive amounts of runoff. Just think of our local weather events of the last two years as evidence of the changing effects of climate change. In such an environment the stability that the effluent provides to BMC is extraordinarily helpful

Finally, SWTU has fully participated in the stakeholder process convened by MMSD to recommend projects to sustain BMC. Regrettably, none of the projects under discussion will meaningfully mitigate the damage to the creek if the effluent is stopped.

Please protect Badger Mill Creek by recommending disapproval of MMSD's amendment. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Steve Musser, President
Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited