

General information

Public comment period begins: January 17, 2023
Public comment period ends: February 16, 2023
Current permit issued: February 1, 2017
Current permit expiration date: January 31, 2022

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Commissioner has made a preliminary determination to reissue this permit for a term of approximately five years.

Name and address of Permittee:

American Peat Technology LLC
36203 350th Avenue
Aitkin, MN 56431-5558

Facility name and location:

American Peat Technology LLC
36203 350th Avenue
Aitkin, MN 56431-5558
Aitkin County
T047N, R26W, Section 022

MPCA contact person:

Kurt Carlson
Industrial Division
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road
Saint Paul, MN 55155
Phone: 651-757-2881
Email: kurt.carlson@state.mn.us

File manager phone: 651-757-2728 or
844-828-0942

A draft permit and permit application are available for review on the MPCA Public Notices webpage at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/publicnotices>. Additional materials relating to the issuance of this permit are available for inspection by appointment at any MPCA office (<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/about-mpca/contact-us>) between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The MPCA will mail or email a copy of the draft permit upon request. Comments, petitions, and other requests must be received at the MPCA in writing on or before the public comment period end date and U.S. Mail comments must be received by 4:30 p.m.

Watershed: Mississippi River - Brainerd

Receiving water: Sisabagamah Creek - Class 2Bg, 3, 4A, 4B, 5, 6 water; Unassessed - Class 2Bg, 3, 4A, 4B, 5, 6 water

Description of Permitted Facility

Principal activity at this facility is harvesting reed-sedge peat for production of granular products for agriculture and water treatment (BioAPT, BioAPT Beads PB, APTsorb, APTIVATOR and GSM 3206). From 2012-2020, the average annual peat harvest rate was 115,000 cubic yds with 21,000 cubic yds of finished product. The plant area consists of the plant, warehouse, slurry holding tank, equipment, material storage areas, and the peat stockpile. The harvest area is divided into two sections: the western/"dry harvest" area and the eastern/"wet harvest" area.

Discharges lead to two private ditches, which eventually flow to County Ditch 24 which then flows to Sisabagamah Creek (AUID 07010104-676). A replacement monitoring location for the former stormwater discharge SD 002 is SD 004, which is expected to be representative of the plant area and more likely to produce a discharge. It is located at a culvert that runs under 350th St. near the property line.

DRY HARVEST: In dry harvest, the western portion of the harvest area (i.e. west of the FN Ditch) is harvested with an excavator during winter. An excavator removes the entire peat profile from the Reclamation Pond and trucks haul peat to the stockpile near the plant. Discharge flows through the Reclamation Pond, manifold ditch, and two parallel settling basins. Discharge from settling basins is controlled by a sheet piling barrier, discharge pipes, and gate valves with discharge through outfall SD 001 at average and maximum rates of 0.140 and 2.9 million gallons per day (MGD), respectively, to County Ditch 24 (Class 2B, 3, 4A, 4B, and 6 waters). Sediment retained in the manifold ditch and settling basins is removed as needed and recovered as raw material.

The facility has one additional dry process that is used infrequently. When the plant is producing products with standards of the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI), peat from the stockpile is introduced directly into the manufacturing process. Neither the slurry-making equipment inside the plant nor the filter presses are used. As a result, there is no discharge during OMRI production.

WET HARVEST: The eastern portion of the harvest area (i.e. east of the FN Ditch) will begin to be harvested in 2021 and will also be full-section excavation. Wet harvest will be carried out during approximately April to December. An excavator will operate from a barge and remove peat from the periphery of the Harvest Pond. Peat will be made into a slurry and pumped directly to the plant for dewatering and further processing. Slurry is introduced into filter presses where the moisture content is reduced to about 70 percent into filter cake. Filter cake is ground and introduced into the manufacturing process. Water from dewatering in the filter presses is either recycled in subsequent slurry batches, used in the plant's air scrubber, or treated in a sand filter before being discharged through outfall SD 003 (at an estimated average 0.04 MGD) to a private ditch. The private ditch ultimately discharges to County Ditch 24. There is no anticipated discharge from SD 003 from the eastern portion of the harvest area because the slurry-making operations will consistently require makeup water.

The only waste from dry operation is woody and fibrous material. This waste is separated from the peat in either the slurry process or with dry screening during OMRI operations. Waste material is used as a road base as needed. Excess material is spread on an upland area north of the stockpile. Waste from the wet operation is also woody and fibrous material but waste is removed on the barge and discharged back into the Harvest Pond.

The preliminary determination to reissue this Wastewater permit is tentative.

Procedure for public participation

As stated in Minn. R. chs. 7000 and 7001, there are three formal procedures for public participation in the MPCA's consideration of this matter. Interested persons may:

- 1) Submit written comments on the draft permit.
- 2) Petition the MPCA to hold a public informational meeting.
- 3) Petition the MPCA to hold a contested case hearing.

Submitting written comments

Comments may be submitted:

- 1) Online at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/publiccomments>; or
- 2) By U.S. postal mail to the following address:
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
c/o Kurt Carlson
520 Lafayette Road
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Submitted comments or petitions must state:

- 1) Your interest in the permit application or the draft permit.
- 2) The action you wish the MPCA to take, including specific references to the section of the draft permit you believe should be changed.

- 3) The reasons supporting your position, stated with sufficient specificity as to allow the MPCA to investigate the merits of the position.

Public informational meeting

A public informational meeting is an informal meeting during which interested persons can ask questions concerning the proposed facility. MPCA staff will be present to provide information. If an interested person would like the MPCA to hold a public informational meeting, the person should include all information identified above and in addition include a statement of the reasons the person desires the MPCA to hold a public informational meeting and the issues that the person would like the agency to address at the public informational meeting.

Contested Case Hearing

A contested case hearing is a formal proceeding before an administrative law judge empowered to advise the MPCA regarding issues of fact. As described in Minn. R. 7000.1800, persons who submit petitions for a contested case hearing must also state the issues they propose to address in a contested case hearing, the specific relief requested or resolution of the matter, and the reasons (which may be in the form of proposed findings) supporting an MPCA decision to hold a contested case hearing. Failure to comply with these rules exactly may result in a denial of the request. To the extent known, the petitioner may also submit a list of prospective witnesses to be called at a hearing, a proposed list of publications, references, or studies to be introduced at a hearing and the approximate time required for the petitioner to present the matter at a hearing. The decision whether to hold a contested case hearing will be made under Minn. R. 7000.1900.