

General information

Public comment period begins: May 21, 2026
Public comment period ends: June 22, 2026
Current permit issued: February 1, 2021
Current permit expiration date: January 31, 2026

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:

Sappi Cloquet LLC
PO Box 511
Cloquet, MN 55720-0511

Facility name and location:

Sappi Cloquet LLC
2201 Avenue B
Cloquet, MN 55720-2155
Carlton County
T49N, R17W, Section 13

MPCA contact person:

Courtney Sullivan
Industrial Division
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
525 Lake Ave S, Ste 400
Duluth, MN 55802
Phone: 218-302-6667
Email: courtney.sullivan@state.mn.us

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

A draft permit is available for review on the MPCA Public Notices webpage at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/get-engaged/public-comments>. 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: St. Louis River

Receiving water: St Louis River - Class 2Bg, 3, 4A, 4B, 5, 6 water

Description of permitted facility

The primary activity at this facility is the manufacture of fine grade printing and writing paper from logs and timber brought on-site at an average production rate of 350,000 tons per year and a maximum production rate of 400,000 tons per year. A total of approximately 450,000 tons of pulp is produced per year, of which 175,000 tons are used on-site in the paper making process. The remaining pulp is dried by the Market Pulp Machine and sold to pulp customers. The pulp mill uses the Kraft pulping process followed by enhanced elemental chlorine free (ECF) bleaching to produce high quality pulp necessary to make fine coated printing paper. The pulp mill was modernized and expanded in the 1990's utilizing state of the art technology in process operations and environmental control.

The facility has permanently discontinued use of surface discharge station (SD) 001, therefore, SD 001 has been removed from this permit. Discharges at this outfall consisted of non-contact cooling waters from the old pulp mill, which has been demolished.

Existing outfall SD 002 consists of an overflow from the clearwell as a result of an instrumentation failure at a maximum rate of 3.69 million gallons per day (mgd) to the St. Louis River near the tail race of the No. 1 turbine. Water in the clearwell has been chemically treated and purified and routed through the Dynasand filters for use in the mill production process.

Existing outfall SD 003 consists of cooling water drained from the process water clearwell pump to the St. Louis River via the clearwell overflow line. Discharge through this outfall is rare and associated flow volume would be minimal (160 gallons per day).

In the event of an outage, chemically-treated water in the 150 foot, 3 million gallon clarifier which is part of the water treatment system used on incoming St. Louis River water would be piped directly back to the river via outfall SD 004 at a maximum rate of 3 mgd.

Existing outfall SD 014 is to permit the facility to temporarily become a non-consumptive user of St. Louis River water under Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) water appropriations statutes by transferring Lake Superior water directly to the St. Louis River at a maximum rate of 16 mgd. The temporary direct discharge would occur only when: (1) Flow on the St. Louis River has been at or below the Q90 (currently as measured at the USGS gage at Scanlon) for 120 consecutive hours; and (2) Lake Superior water is unavailable for the facility's process use as a result of a turbidity level that is unacceptable to the facility.

The facility is authorized to discharge a maximum of 80,000 gallons per day from draining of the cooling towers in the event of a maintenance outage. This is not a direct discharge but a discharge via the stormwater detention pond, which eventually overflows to the St. Louis River. The cooling tower discharge is monitored at waste station (WS) 001. This suboutfall would be used only once or twice per year. Treated water is added to the tower from the 150' clarifier or Lake Superior water system.

Sappi discharges its industrial process wastewaters to the publicly owned treatment works (POTW), operated by the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD). WLSSD was delegated the authority to administer the pretreatment program on June 24, 1985 and therefore, the 'indirect discharge' of process wastewaters as defined herein is not the subject of this NPDES/SDS permit.

Currently authorization for discharges of stormwater associated with industrial activities are provided by the NPDES/SDS General Stormwater Permit for Industrial Activity Permit MNR050000.

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 <https://mpca.commentinput.com/comment/search>; or
- 2) By U.S. postal mail to the following address:

Courtney Sullivan
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
525 Lake Ave S, Ste 400
Duluth, MN 55802

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.