

EPA Forces PR to Upgrade 126 Wastewater Plants

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico's water utility must upgrade more than 100 drinking water treatment plants, including some that currently discharge untreated sludge into local waterways, according to a settlement announced Tuesday.

The Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority must also pay a \$1 million civil penalty under the consent decree with the U.S. government — the latest in a series of agreements that date to 1995 and address similar issues in the U.S. Caribbean territory.

"Unfortunately there is a history of environmental violations, and we are very determined at the Environmental Protection Agency to make sure the residents of Puerto Rico have clean and safe drinking water," EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck said at a news conference. "The agreement today will help ensure clean drinking water for many people."

Enck said the pollution does not pose an immediate health threat, but the upgrades will improve water quality across Puerto Rico.

Most of the people served by the 126 treatment plants that require upgrades live in low-income communities, according to U.S. officials.

The upgrades, which will cost an estimated \$195 million, involve new monitoring equipment, sewer lines and the construction of treatment systems at 34 facilities where sediment filtered out of drinking water is currently dumped back into lakes, rivers and streams. The cost will be partially offset by \$70 million in federal stimulus money that the utility received last year.

Source URL (retrieved on 02/01/2015 - 8:32am):

http://www.chem.info/news/2010/05/epa-forces-pr-upgrade-126-wastewater-plants?qt-recent_content=0