



Back River WWTP: Update on Odor Action Plan

September 24, 2026

A Collaborative Effort Between Maryland
Department of the Environment, Baltimore City,
and Baltimore County

Tonight's Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Public Comment (BRCAG)
3. News (MDE)
4. Recent Updates (Baltimore City)
 - a. Third party engineering assessment, ongoing repairs, solids removal, new push notification system, and recent odor complaints
5. Ongoing Monitoring (Baltimore County)
6. Thank you!



Welcome

MDE



Public Comment

Back River Community Action Group



Updates

MDE



Odor Investigation Update

- MDE issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) to Back River on September 18 for nuisance odor violations related to:
 - May 15 and September 9-10 inspections
 - Increase in odors and complaints since mid-August
- Back River must submit a written explanation of corrective actions with a tentative schedule to MDE by Friday, October 2



Odor Reporting

- Reminder: Smell MyCity (SMC) is being used for data collection only. SMC reports are not treated as formal complaints, and you will not receive a response from MDE.
- For the fastest response during an odor event, please call one of the following phone numbers based on your specific complaint:
 - Back River Operators' Office: **410-396-9845**
 - Baltimore County Pump Station Dispatch: **410-887-5210**
- You can still submit a formal complaint directly to MDE either through the [MDE Back River Website](#) (preferred) or by calling the MDE ARA complaint line: **410-537-3215**



Joint Inspection: MDE & EPA

- Occurred on September 9th & 10th
- MDE inspectors from Water and Air participated
- Inspection report will be published and shared once finalized



New Back River Bypasses Page

- New dedicated page for Back River bypasses:
https://opendata.maryland.gov/Government/Back-River-Bypasses/cjgx-js-cg/data_preview
- MDE's general database for bypasses and overflows:
https://opendata.maryland.gov/Government/Reported-Sewer-Overflows-New-for-2023-/stgj-u72u/data_preview
- Updated within 24 hours after notification by DPW. Provides details such as discharge volume and overflow cause.



Back River WWTP Discharge Permit

- Notice of tentative determination published on April 15, 2025
- [Tentative draft permit](#)
- Public hearing was held on May 15, 2025
- Final permit should be issued by the end of this year
- More info [here](#)



Questions or Comments?



Updates from Baltimore City

1. Third-party engineering assessment
2. Ongoing repairs
3. Solids removal
4. Push notification system
5. Recent odor complaints and response



Third-party assessment of on- and off-plant odor sources

An independent engineering assessment is under way to identify odor sources both on and off the plant, supported by odor dispersion modeling.

01 AERMOD

Regulatory grade dispersion model used to estimate odor concentrations in and around the site.

02 Gaussian Plume

Classical plume model used as a cross check on the AERMOD results

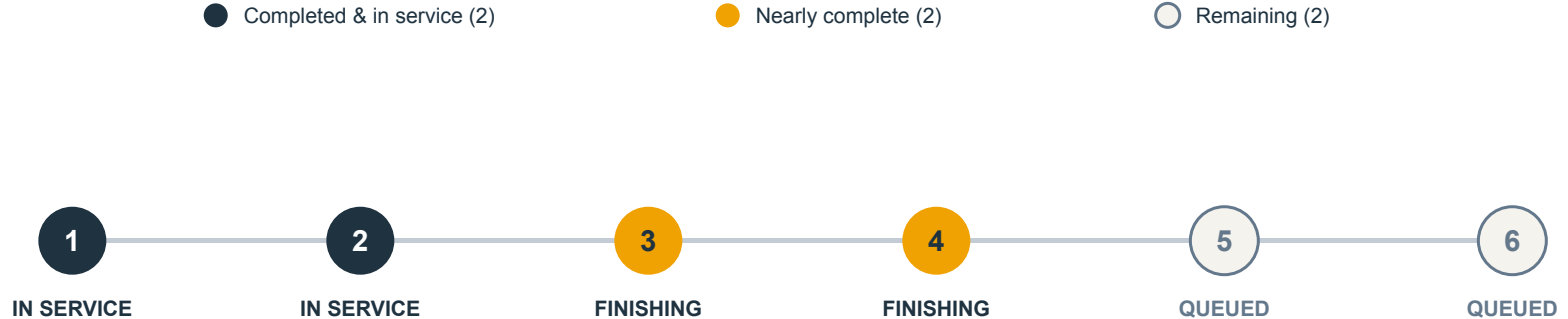
03 Additional alternative model **ON THE WAY - OCTOBER**

A third dispersion model is being added to give a better perspective and further validate the findings.



Inground digester rehab — 4 of 6 complete or nearly complete

Two digesters are completed and back in service, two more finish in the coming weeks, and the final two will be drained for rehab once the current pair is complete. We are also placing the APR in service as a mesophilic digester (similar to the in-grounds) along with the next 2 being started.

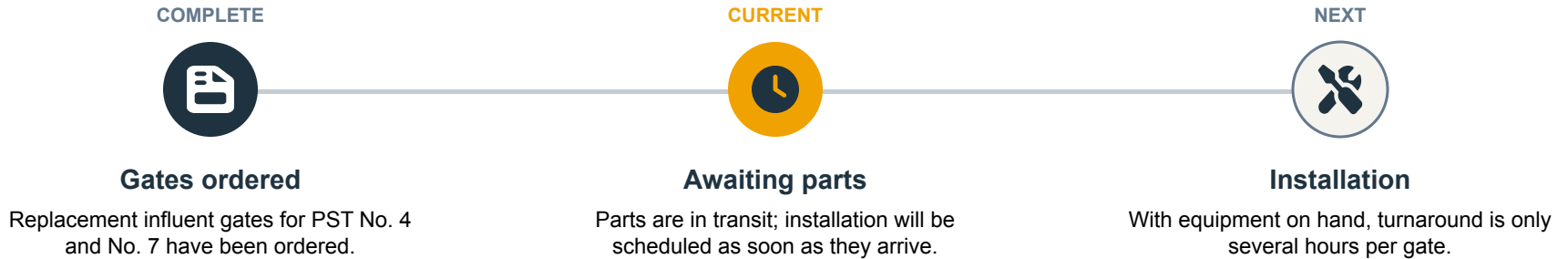


Sequencing: once the current pair is completed in the coming weeks, the final two inground digesters will be drained and taken offline for rehabilitation.



Influent gate replacements ordered for PST No. 4 and No. 7

Parts are on order and installation begins as soon as they arrive.



Turnaround time with equipment on hand, several hours per gate

Replacement applies to the No. 4 and No. 7 primary settling tank influent gates.



LAGOON SOLIDS REMOVAL

Solids removal under way in both lagoon 47.5% completed



Lagoon No. 1

■ IN PROGRESS – DENALI ONSITE



Lagoon No.2

■ IN PROGRESS – DENALI ONSITE

Accumulated solids are being removed from the lagoon and hauled off-site. Removal activities on pace for mid to end of October, though this can be extended by weather events.



Bypass Light protocol update, notification sign-up open

■ Protocol update in place

The bypass light protocol has been updated, clarifying when the warning light is activated during an event at the plant via email which has links to the map, information, and sign up if was alert was forwarded.

■ What the light does

The bypass light provides an immediate visual indication of plant status for staff and the surrounding community.

■ Open to the community

Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to register so they are notified whenever the bypass light activates.

SIGN UP FOR NOTIFICATIONS

Register to receive a notification whenever the bypass light is activated.

To get more information [click here](#) or to sign up [click here](#).

For updates: [interactive map](#)

Questions about plant operations:
410-545-6541

Questions about potential health impacts:
410-396-4428.

For more info about the bypass:
https://opendata.maryland.gov/Government/Bac k-River-Bypasses/cjgx-jscg/data_preview



Six odor complaints logged in September 2026

6

Odor complaints received via plant hotline in September 2026

- All six rated strong intensity
- 5 of 6 from Dundalk/ Walmart area
- 4 complaint days: Sept 5, 15, 21, 22

Response: Hydrogen peroxide feed adjusted on 4 of 6 calls, 2 calls handle with monitoring

COMPLAINT DETAIL - SEPTEMBER 2026

Date	Area of notice	Action taken
Sep 22	Old North Point & Willow Rd.	Adjusted hydrogen peroxide
Sep 21	Dundalk — Walmart	Adjusted hydrogen peroxide
Sep 15	Merritt Blvd & Meadow Ln, Dundalk	—
Sep 5 (3 calls)	Walmart	Adjusted hydrogen peroxide; monitoring

Source: Plant hotline complaint log, September 2026. Caller names and number omitted.



Questions or Comments?



Ongoing Water Quality Monitoring

Baltimore County, contact:

tcavanagh@baltimorecountymd.gov



Questions or Comments?



Summary and Moving Forward

- Recap
- Follow-up items
- Continue to report odors
- Next meeting: Thursday, November 19, 2026 from 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- Contact eva.elbert@maryland.gov with MDE questions/comments

