



STATEMENT REGARDING DUCKS

The Metro Wastewater Reclamation District is happy to note that a number of ill ducks that were recovered at our Central Treatment Plant at 64th and York have since recovered and been released into the wild.

The Metro District is also aware that a number of theories and rumors have surfaced speculating on the reason for the ducks' deaths. The Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) is the lead agency in the investigation of this matter. They have not yet identified a cause of the ducks' deaths. Their most recent press release says the following:

CDOW veterinarians have only been able to identify ailments that are not affecting the birds at this point. Avian Influenza and Avian Cholera test results have come back negative and histology from the birds shows no clinical signs of disease. There are no conclusive test results pointing to the cause--additional tests are being conducted at United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) labs in Ashland, Oregon and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) labs in Madison, Wisconsin. CDOW and USFWS are confident there is no significant risk to public health.

"We are focusing on what causes the ducks to lose their waterproofing as well as the cause of the malnutrition evident in many of the birds," said Dr. Laurie Baeten, CDOW Veterinarian. "There are many factors we need to consider in trying to investigate a die-off and we are doing all we can to methodically apply the science available to us."

The CDOW and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment have also identified other areas in the Colorado Front Range that have experienced larger-than-normal numbers of dead ducks this winter. These include both other treatment plants and non-wastewater treatment locations, making the duck problem one that is regional in nature and not specific to Metro.

Some people are speculating that magnesium chloride is causing the deaths of the ducks. The Metro District operates what is known as a sanitary sewer system that specifically excludes stormwater, including snowmelt runoff that would contain magnesium chloride. Although it is possible that ducks could come in contact with magnesium chloride that has run off into creeks and rivers at locations other than Metro, magnesium chloride is excluded from Metro's system.

Metro District employees began discovering larger than normal numbers of dead ducks in the chlorine contact basin in early January. Metro contacted the Colorado Division of Wildlife and worked with both them and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to investigate and isolate potential causes. In the course of this investigation, chlorine and the chlorine contact basin at Metro were eliminated as potential causes.

Metro also conducted water quality tests and found the treated water to be within normal ranges.

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