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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**November 1, 2017**

## **SEWER LEAK RESULTING IN OVERFLOW INTO MISSISSIPPI RIVER**

*Papoose Lift Station shut down to expedite repairs to sewer line in Muscatine*

**MUSCATINE, Iowa** – An observed small leak at the intersection of Day, Birch, and Nebraska Streets turned into a bigger leak and will take longer than expected to repair according to City of Muscatine officials. The City is working to excavate the area around the sewer line at that intersection to find and repair the leak. But first crews were having to pump out the wastewater that was filling the hole almost as quickly as the hole was being dug.

Before the excavation could begin in earnest, the City was forced to turn off the Papoose Lift Station Tuesday (Oct. 31) to allow the force main to drain. Turning off the lift station resulted in a sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) into the Mississippi River from the lift station located upriver of the old boat landing in Riverside Park.

No health hazards are expected from this discharge due to the limited use of the river in the affected area at this time.

“We have a fairly good idea of where the leak is but will not be able to fully assess the situation until sometime Thursday,” Brian Stineman, Director of Public Works, said. “We are not sure whether it is the force main or a private line but the amount of water that is coming out gives us a clue as to where we should look.”

Jon Koch, Director of the Water Pollution Control Plant, said that a small flow of water was found bubbling out of the ground near the intersection of Nebraska and Day streets by

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Muscatine Power and Water (MPW) at about 9 a.m. Monday (Oct. 30). MPW determined the water was a sanitary sewer overflow by the condition and odor of the water which was later confirmed by the Muscatine Environmental Laboratory.

“We prepped the area Monday afternoon and notified the Iowa Department of Natural Resources,” Koch said. “We also asked the residents around Briar’s Ditch to avoid walking in the affected area and to not enter Briar’s Ditch until the leak is repaired.”

Excavation of the area began immediately and it was determined that sanitary water was apparently leaking in the area of the large force main from Papoose Lift Station approaching the Water Pollution Control Plant. Whether the leak is coming from the force main or a private line will not be known until the sewer lines are examined.

Crews pumped the area around the leak overnight to drain the 30-inch force main so that the area could be excavated and the leak located. This water was directed to the storm drain that leads to Briar's Ditch and ultimately to the Muscatine Slough. Attempts to direct the water to a sanitary sewer line were unsuccessful due to the high sand content in the water that quickly plugged the line.

City staff is testing the length of the discharge to identify how far reaching the wastewater contamination is and attempts are being made to notify those affected in the drainage area.

“We plan to use a sand point well to filter the water and then direct that water back into the sanitary sewer line running towards the Water Pollution Control Plant,” Stineman said. “That will take the sand out of the water which will allow us to push the water into the sanitary sewer line and stop the discharge into Briar’s Ditch.”

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The Papoose Lift Station was turned off Tuesday to allow the force main to drain. The wet well and Papoose Tunnel filled during this time and began discharging into the Mississippi River late Tuesday.

City staff approximates that three million gallons of untreated wastewater will be discharged to the Mississippi River from 5 p.m. Tuesday to 5 p.m. Wednesday (Nov. 1) or about 2,100 gallons per minute. The Mississippi is currently flowing at approximately 45 million gallons per minute.

Papoose Tunnel discharges upstream from the old boat landing along the Muscatine Riverfront. Water quality immediately downstream of this discharge may not meet State standards for fishing and swimming and contact should be avoided. The old boat landing was closed by the City Wednesday until repairs are completed and the lift station turned on.

The Port Louisa Pumping District has been notified to get the word out to those affected along the Muscatine Slough. Downstream water facilities in Burlington and Keokuk have been notified.

The extent of the repairs needed will not be known until the area around the leak can be drained for excavation and the source of the leak identified. It was estimated that excavation would commence before 11 a.m. Wednesday (Nov. 1) but that depended on how fast the force main can be drained.

The intersection at Day/Birch/Nebraska has been closed for emergency repairs to a sewer line. It is not known how long the intersection will be closed or when repairs will be completed.

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