

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS | SPECIFIC FACILITY QUESTIONS

What is the Johnson Utilities Section 11 Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)?

The Section 11 WWTP uses older technology to treat wastewater. This a lagoon-style treatment system built in late 1990s and predates many of the homes built around the facility.

Why did Johnson Utilities apply for the April 2018 permit amendment for the Section 11 WWTP?

The April 2018 permit amendment application received from Johnson Utilities was to construct an additional recharge basin, which provides the Section 11 plant additional disposal capacity of treated wastewater. No additional wastewater treatment capacity was proposed in the application.

Why did Johnson Utilities withdraw the April 2018 permit amendment application for the Section 11 WWTP?

The Arizona Corporation Commission appointed an interim manager to manage Johnson Utilities LLC in August 2018. The interim manager proceeded with a comprehensive engineering review of Johnson Utilities facilities, including the Section 11 WWTP. After reviewing the overall status of the Section 11 WWTP, the interim manager determined the best path forward to manage the facility differed from the actions outlined in the permit amendment application.

In January and February 2019, the Pecan Water Reclamation Plant discharged treated effluent to Queen Creek (the wash), but does not have a permit to do so. Why did this happen?

The unpermitted discharge was due to an exceedance of recharge capacity of the Pecan Water Reclamation Plant. Two discharges have taken place: one in January 2019, with a release of 15.36 million gallons, and one in February 2019, with a release of 19.8 million gallons.

Were there public health concerns with this discharge of treated effluent?

ADEQ was able to confirm the January and February 2019 discharges met the water quality standards for A+ effluent and that surface water quality standards were being met.

If the water is treated, why did ADEQ issue a press release?

An unpermitted discharge means additional measures to protect public health and the environment are not in place that would be with a permitted discharge. A permitted discharge of this kind would be required to do additional monitoring for surface water quality standards, as determined by an Arizona Pollution Discharge Elimination System (AZPDES) permit.

Through the press releases, ADEQ was able to inform the public that we were aware of the unpermitted discharge, provide measures to take if they had contact with the water, and let them know that the additional sampling for surface water quality standards was being done. Additional updates notified the public of the results for an acute contaminant (E. coli) that could have immediate impact on public health. The results for both discharges were that E. coli was within the allowable limit for this discharge. E. coli is naturally occurring and most strains are not harmful to humans. Surface water quality standards allow a certain level of E. coli that would be expected from natural sources.

Why am I now seeing additional signage for reclaimed water use at the former Magic Ranch Golf Course?

The former Magic Ranch Golf Course continues to be irrigated with reclaimed water from the Section 11 Waste Water Treatment Plant. This is the same quality of water used previously, but it is not to the

standard appropriate for playing, drinking and washing. Golf course irrigation can use Class B reclaimed water, as there is restricted access to the landscape irrigation. For landscapes that do not have restricted access, Class A or better water is required for irrigation. Because ADEQ and Johnson Utilities do not have authority to restrict access to this private property, additional signage regarding water used for irrigation is being posted around the former golf course. ADEQ is working with Johnson Utilities to find other locations to use this water. Take care to keep children and pets away from the water. If there is contact with the water, wash with soap and clean water as soon as possible.