

Resubmitted 2nd DEP Complaint submitted 09/25/25

Subject: Oak Run 2nd Official DEP Complaint

From: Ana Ortiz-SWT Chair

To: David Smicherko, Department of Environmental Protection, Orlando Florida

cc: Alexis A. Lambert, Secretary of Environmental Protection

As residents of the Oak Run (55+) Community, Seniors Working Together Committee (SWT) was formed to interact with Marion County Commissioners and Marion County Utilities Officials to find a resolution to the two decade ongoing sewage problems plaguing our community. Oak Run is located at 110th St and Hwy 200, Southwest Marion County, Ocala, FL. We are seeking relief and resolution to ongoing environmental concerns and oversight of the planned expansion of the Marion County Southwest Regional Water Reclamation(SWRWR) Facility. The SWRWR Facility is located at 11400 90th Terrace, Marion County, Ocala, FL. The Facility and the Collection system continue to create unfavorable air quality throughout our community. This negatively impacts our quality of life and health, contributes to environmental degradation, and is contributing to a decline in property values. We are asking for help and request that the Marion County Utilities Southwest Regional Water Reclamation (SWRWR) Facility and the Collection System abide by the Law, and not allow the "...odors/gases/fumes known as objectionable/nuisance shall not extend beyond their property boundaries and shall not adversely affect neighboring areas." Corrective action is available under Florida DEP Chapter 62-640 FL Clean Water Act and F.A.C. Chapter 62-600.410.

This complaint is based on the **known facts**. This Wastewater Treatment (WWT) system was built 40 years ago to accommodate only 3500 homes in Oak Run. When MCU purchased this facility in 2002, and increased the service areas, this was the beginning of our problems. We believe this increase of sewage has placed a strain on the existing infrastructure as revealed by recurring problem areas reported and identified by residents. MCU'S admitted that lack of general maintenance for more than two decades led to the current conditions which include numerous incorrect configurations, severely deteriorated manholes, lift stations, Noisy and odoriferous operations, which all contribute to the development and dispersion of H2S gas experienced throughout our Oak Run community, not identified in the initial DEP complaint filed in February 2025.

A wastewater treatment (WWT) and sewage system requires regular maintenance, inspections, prompt repairs, identifying blockages, controlling H2S gas development and accumulation within the collection system, preventing purging and sewage leaks, to prevent more significant issues. This ageing facility and sewage infrastructure are of real concern and stress to our community and **causing health concerns**. In addition, MCU cannot identify the cause of the problems within the collection system, more specifically at the Lift Stations and manholes, elevating concern of the potential danger of releasing pathogens such as fungi, bacteria, viruses and parasites associated with wastewater into the air and environment. What is **even more alarming**, MCU has failed to address these concerns and this, coupled with the daily bombardment of H2S gases, released into the community, has placed a stressful burden on residents and raised frustration to a breaking point. MCU Director Tony Cunningham stated in March of 2025, in an Oak Run town hall meeting with residents, MCU "only does maintenance on an as needed basis." This action plan amounts to no more than bandage triage and reflects MCU'S lack of urgency to identify and rectify the problems. Their focus appears to be on the expansion of the Facility as quickly as possible, despite the now known and identified problems within the infrastructure.

Known facts discovered:

- Because of the **exposure to dangerous** gases, pathogens released from the collection system into the air and our environment, entering into homes, we have several residents who are experiencing severe health issues.
- Over the past 2 decades, MCU has had numerous opportunities to evaluate and conduct an investigation to identify all areas of concerns reported by residents. MCU has ignored calls and placated residents for years, denied gas emissions, lied about gas and noise sources, and tried to convince elderly residents they were not smelling sewage! MCU even went as far as **blaming the gas H₂S on the crematory!**
- It has been determined and **MCU now acknowledges**, that they are aware of the problems, but claim they do not know the cause. (**Further justification for oversight authority.**) We request an independent Florida State certified WWT Engineer to evaluate the entire collection system and Facility Operations based on the requirements documented in the July 2025, DEP Settlement Agreement, which MCU refuses to sign.
- MCU admitted **that proper general maintenance** of the collection system had not previously been performed prior to the current administration. This leads residents to question MCU'S previous reporting methods as related to past and current permitting authorization and justification for the current 10-year permit issued by DEP, despite the numerous complaints and spills reported and recorded. We request the current 10 year permit be revoked or reduced to a three year permit and MCU be placed under close supervision monitored by the DEP.
- MCU Assistant Director Josh Kramer admitted **that there are several Lift Stations** that have not been maintained and serviced in accordance with industry standards, because they **cannot access** these areas with their 30 foot vehicle. When residents reacted to this and questioned what kind of service had been done, the assistant Director stated service was conducted by technicians who simply scraped down the tunnel walls into the Lift Station vault. This equates to two decades of neglect and improper reporting methods. Yet another valid reason to modify or rescind the 10 year permit. **Noted:** MCU has made no mention of this access problem or made any attempt or effort to rectify or work with Oak Run to develop adequate egress in 20 years. This only came to light when MCU used this as an excuse during a meeting on September 12, 2025, at Mr. Barker's home when investigating the numerous complaints because the resident cannot use one half their home due to the intensity of H₂S gas. Lift Station #1, is dispersing H₂s gas throughout the homeowner's property and seeping into the back of their home. This home and neighborhood also reported rats and mice infestation around the lift station which is a real health hazard. The SWT Committee called Marion County Health Department and were advised to contact the DEP.
- MCU admitted **the current collection system diagrams** submitted for the purpose of obtaining the 10 year permit **are inaccurate**. For example, **MCU admitted** the diagrams have wrong pipe sizes and connections throughout the collection system. **Note:** On September 2, 2025, at a meeting between the MCU Director and assistant director, and the SWT Chair and SWT WWT Analyst, MCU revealed they were surprised when they discovered an unknown connection in relation to flow levels involving lift stations #12 and #1, suspecting possible anaerobic/dry flow conditions exist. This was in reply to an area the SWT highlighted as problematic. These concerns were previously discussed and dismissed by both MCU and the DEP on July 29, 2025. This is yet another reason why MCU'S 10 year permit should be revoke, revised or modified.
- Recent discovery of **high levels of H₂S gas by SWT Committee members** at numerous lift stations and manholes throughout Oak Run, **contradicts the 3rd party contractor's (Premier) readings of H₂S reduction submitted to MCU**. **MCU has reported these numbers to the DEP** in an attempt to vacate their current noncompliance status by masking gases with Magnesium and chemicals. Some areas have reported lessened odors, but high H₂S gas levels are recorded. This, coupled with

MCU'S **refusal to sign the DEP Settlement Agreement**, leads residents to believe the true causes will be ignored, if MCU can sufficiently mask the gas odors and convince the DEP this is an acceptable solution.

- These additional discoveries over the past 9 months, far surpass the initial DEP inspection findings, and justify an additional in-depth inspection of the **entire Collection System** and Facility operations, prior to the further expansion of the Facility. We believe the most immediate issue is to identify all potential areas that could be sources of the sewer gas release and nuisance odors. This will aid in preventing the release of future diffusion of gas vapors and dangerous pathogens. Research guidelines' show that wastewater treatment facilities **seal all areas handling biosolids and sources of gas and nuisance odors**, whether a tank, basin, or lagoon, with an industrial grade cover. (Oak Run has only ½ of one tank sealed and is located in close proximity to homes.)
- Our Community requests **postponement** of the planned tripling of this Facility and adding additional and future developments until the current source of problems are identified and permanent resolutions are implemented. We respectfully request that an environmental impact study be performed, due to prolonged exposure to H₂S gas and sewage from Lift Stations, manholes, centrifuge/Centrisys unit, open-air biosolid tanks, open-air disposal areas, the open-air transport collection tanker, and the collection of debris from the Head works, which all pose significant irritants and health threats. The inspection should include testing wastewater leach field, surrounding areas/properties, properties that use the reclaimed water product for irrigation, wells, air quality and other water sources to ensure no contaminants from this facility or the infrastructure are present. This is supported by the recent discovery by an SWT Committee member, when she observed and documented an opened access tunnel that was severely deteriorated and had visible exposed bed rock and concrete spalling that could allow raw sewage to leach into the aquifer.
- **When spalling occurs** in an access tunnel to a wastewater infrastructure, it indicates serious and significant concerns about structural integrity, potential collapse, safety risks, and the spread of contaminants. The corrosive environment of wastewater accelerates spalling, making it more destructive and **urgent to address**. Based on the photographic evidence SWT obtained, MCU did address this access tunnel and refurbished it. However, there are many more access tunnels throughout Oak Run that need to be evaluated. The only reason this area tunnel was addressed is because of the photographic evidence obtained by SWT. MCU has made no mention of the remaining access tunnels and are denying SWT to access to obtain evidence which could support their suspicions of damage to these areas based on gas expulsion, age and lack of maintenance. A Florida State Inspector does have the authority to conduct these inspections to identify and verify needed repairs and upgrades to the collection system. Additionally, MCU in March of 2025, promised to construct a heavy plastic curtain around the Centrifuge/Centrisys unit and build a berm around the Facility to mitigate the noise and gas dispersion. This was promised to be completed by the end of August 2025, but has not begun.
- We have received countless explanations and promises for improvements, but the problems remain and are spreading throughout the Collection System and Facility operations. There has been an ongoing problem with this Marion County SWRWR Facility in excess of **2 decades**, with little improvement. Countless complaints over the years to MCU and Marion County Commissioners, yielded temporary noise intervention, but not eliminating the excessive noise.
- Given all the complaints, spills, lack of maintenance, deterioration of collection system and facility, we are astounded that MCU received a 10 year permit. We are even more shocked that the DEP is not considering modification of this 10 year permit, nor levied fines for violations. We hope this document is reviewed and action is forthcoming based on the numerous reports, videos and audio clips previously sent to your attention.

**ADDENDUM TO 2ND DEP
COMPLAINT FILED 9/25/25**

Areas of repetitive raw sewage gas expelled from MCU infrastructure collection system dispersed into our community affecting residents and creating odor nuisance, decline of quality of life, health and property values for Oak Run residents.

(This report reflects periods from 12/25 through 9/25)

DEVICE	LOCATION
FACILITY	GAS DISPERSED FROM OPEN CENTRIFUGE/CENTRISYS UNIT, OPEN-AIR DISPOSAL AREAS, AND THE OPEN-AIR TRANSPORT TANKER, AND COLLECTION OF DEBRIS FROM THE HEAD WORKS
LIFT STATION #1	NEIGHBORHOOD #1
LIFT STATION #2	NEIGHBORHOOD #2
LIFT STATION #3	NEIGHBORHOOD #5
LIFT STATION #8	NEIGHBORHOOD #15
LIFT STATION #9	NEIGHBORHOOD #18
LIFT STATION #12	NEIGHBORHOOD #22
LIFT STATION #11	NEIGHBORHOOD #22 & GOLF COURSE
LIFT STATION #5	NEIGHBORHOODS #1, 2 & 12
LIFT STATION #13	NEIGHBORHOOD #1 AND HIGHWAY 200 SW 110 TH ST, ENTRANCE TO OAK RUN
LIFT STATION #14	NEIGHBORHOOD #24
MANHOLE	IN THE COMMUNITY BETWEEN PARK AVENUE EAST AND WEST

MANHOLE	9001 SW 109 TH LANE IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	SW 78 TER AND 78 CIR IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	9088 SW 109 LN IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	10808 SW 89 TH AVE AND SW 8895 SW 108 TH ST ON THE COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	9267 109 LN ST IN THE COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	8961 SW 109 LN IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	8976 SW 109 LN IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	10917 SW 83 RD AVE IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	SW 73 TER AND 115 TH ST RD IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	SW 83 AVE AND SW 108 LOOP IN FRONT OF 10825 IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	SW 110 TH INTO SW 115 TH ST RD IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	11209 SW 71 ST TER RD IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	SW 115 TH ST RD, WEST OF PARK VIEW IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	*SWEET PUNGENT* GAS ODOR IN FRONT SW 115 TH ST RD AND THE ENTRANCE TO THE FOUNTAINS IN OUR COMMUNITY (ANAEROBIC CONDITIONS)
MANHOLE	11602 SW 69 CIR IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	9281 SW 109 TH LANE IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	10808 SW 89 AVE IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	SW 83 RD AVE RD AND SW 110 TH ST IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	10913 SW 83 RD IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	SW 87 TH CT IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	10874 SW 89 TH CT IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	10882 SW 89 CT IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	10919 SW 86 TH AV IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	10833 SW 83 RD AVE IN OUR COMMUNITY
MANHOLE	11540 SW 74 TH CT

MANHOLE	11600 SW 74 TH CT
MANHOLE	10534 SW 72 ND CIR 2 MANHOLE BEHIND HOUSE

