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EPA seeks records in probe of Jefferson County wastewater plants

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is investigating whether Jefferson County is polluting waters with untreated sewage, even after it spent \$1.1 billion on new wastewater treatment plants.

The EPA has asked to see records showing monthly operating and weekly flow reports from the new Cahaba, Leeds, Trussville and Village Creek plants.

The county has not reported discharging partially treated or untreated sewage from those plants, but Environmental Services Department director Robert Henderson said they will review the records and help the federal agency in every way.

"We're going to be very transparent and let them know any possible thing that happened," Henderson told The Birmingham News in a story Tuesday.

Environmental agencies usually rely on plant managers to submit monthly reports because it would be too expensive to monitor every plant that discharges into a stream.

Bart Slawson, one of the lawyers who sued the county in 1993 to force it to clean up its sewer system, said the government, with its request for records, is essentially saying it does not believe the county's reports. But Slawson said he does not know what the county could be doing wrong.

He said EPA may be examining the plants because of the system's financial problems and fraud allegations.

Information from: The Birmingham News