

*This story ran throughout Tennessee and nationwide in print and TV press.*

## Franklin agrees to steps to limit Harpeth River pollution

By TRAVIS LOLLER - Associated Press - Wednesday, May 11, 2016

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) - The city of Franklin has agreed to take steps to further limit pollution of the Harpeth River from its sewage treatment plant.

The settlement between Franklin and the Harpeth River Watershed Association was filed in federal court on Tuesday. It calls for Franklin to prioritize pollution controls as it expands its sewage plant. Franklin also will spend \$10 million over five years on upgrading old sewer lines and other projects to protect the river. The money is part of its existing capital improvements budget, and the city says the settlement won't mean increased sewer rates.

As part of the settlement, Franklin has agreed to notify the public about sewage spills through its website and also by placing signs near affected streams and notifying nearby residents and businesses.

Watershed Association Executive Director Dorie Bolze said in a phone interview that the step will help build public support for spending money to maintain and improve the sewage system.

Franklin also has agreed to perform extensive water quality testing as part of a comprehensive study of the entire Harpeth River watershed. Bolze said the study will be done in conjunction with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and will be a demonstration project for the Southeast.

"Figuring out what's going on in the river is a big deal," Bolze said.

Bolze said it's important to study the entire watershed to know where pollution is coming from and where it is going.

"Impacts can happen 20 or 30 river-miles downstream," she said.

Franklin has committed up to \$150,000 for its part of the project.

City Administrator Eric Stuckey said only about 16 miles of the 125-mile river are within city limits, but Franklin is committed to being the best possible steward of its natural environment, including the Harpeth.

"This agreement allows us to move forward as we take care of the river - which is a key focus of all the planning the city has done," he said in a phone interview.

The settlement comes after an acrimonious fight between Franklin and the nonprofit that included a countersuit by the city.

U.S. District Judge Kevin Sharp in November dismissed the city's claim and encouraged the parties to have some "adult conversation" to resolve their differences.

Sharp must sign the settlement before it becomes final. The settlement will be enforceable by the court.

Neither party has admitted any wrongdoing and neither will seek attorneys' fees.

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