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Maryland Attorney General, MDE file complaint against Valley Proteins

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Valley Proteins is located in Linkwood near the Transquaking River.

PHOTO BY MIKE DETMER

BALTIMORE — Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh and Maryland Department of the Environment Secretary Ben Grumbles filed a complaint in the Circuit Court for Dorchester County against Valley Proteins on Wednesday, Feb. 2.

Valley Proteins is an industrial poultry rendering facility on Linkwood Road, just off U.S. Route 50 in Dorchester County. The plant receives poultry processing waste and processes it again into various components such as pet food.

The 48-page complaint filed in the county circuit court seeks preliminary and permanent injunctive relief and civil penalties for violations of Maryland's environmental laws and regulations.

Since March 2001, Valley Proteins has operated the facility under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The permit expiration date was February 28, 2006 but was administratively extended.

In required discharge monitoring reports from April 2019 through October 2021, Valley Proteins reported 40 effluent violations over a period of 598 days. Inspections conducted by MDE from January 2019 through January 2022 revealed additional violations, including pollutants in a position likely to pollute waters of the State, including into a nearby tributary of the Transquaking River; failure to implement stormwater pollution plan best management practices; numerous violations of total residual chlorine exceedances; unauthorized discharges of wastewater, sludge, and solids; and failure to operate the wastewater treatment plant with a certified operator.

“We intend to prove that Valley Proteins has violated the law and put at risk fragile ecosystems and the waters of the state,” Frosh said in a press release. “The complaint seeks to hold Valley Proteins accountable for the harm it has caused and to ensure that it does no further damage.”

Recent air quality inspections by MDE also uncovered 89 parametric monitoring deviations on the air pollution control equipment, as well as violations of continuous air monitoring. Valley Proteins has since installed new monitoring equipment and performed maintenance on its scrubbers.

Recent follow-up inspections confirmed that the plant has come back into compliance with its air emissions permit. However, during another inspection in October, MDE detected odors beyond the property line and there have been multiple complaints of odors in the surrounding neighborhood.

Under the terms of an interim consent order issued on Dec. 23, 2021, Valley Proteins is prohibited from discharging until the facility can comply with their NPDES permit effluent limits and can operate consistent with their NPDES permit.

However, the facility was allowed to resume other operations after reaching a strict agreement with MDE.