

## Carroll asks state to hold off on water treatment plant fines

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### Carroll County

Carroll County has requested the Maryland Department of the Environment pass on fining its Hampstead Wastewater Treatment Plant for violating a maximum temperature set by the state on the treated water the plant discharges into the Piney Run stream.

County commissioners approved a Carroll County Circuit Court consent order, which was sent Thursday to MDE, asking the state to waive its \$500-a-day penalty while MDE decides whether to approve the county's request to increase the maximum temperature allowed for effluent, or discharge, from 68 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit, said James Slater Jr., environmental compliance officer for the county.

Litigation has been swirling around the waters of the treatment plant for many years, Slater said.

As the stream flows into neighboring Baltimore County, residents there belonging to the Piney Run Preservation Association first sued Carroll County for violating the Clean Water Act more than a decade ago, arguing that the warmer water killed brown trout, a protected species of fish, said Carroll County spokeswoman Vivian Laxton.

And the environmental group will sue again if it decides the consent order is a "slap on the wrists" for Carroll, said G. Macy Nelson, a Towson lawyer who represents the association.

"Carroll County has known about this for so many years," Nelson said. "They have to face reality and are refusing to do it."

Reality, or compliance, for Carroll County would mean spending \$1.6 million on chillers that would reduce the treated water's temperature a few degrees, Slater said.

He said Carroll has completed "years of data sampling and formal analysis" and has deemed the brown trout population as healthy.

"They say the stream's doing fine, that the trout population is robust, but that's two miles downstream," Nelson said.

"These guys have been stalling."