

Region 6 Compliance Assurance and Enforcement Division

INSPECTION REPORT

Inspection Date(s):	1/29/2026		
Media:	Water		
Regulatory Program(s)	Clean Water Act		
Company Name:	City of Rio Grande		
Facility Names:	City of Rio Grande		
Facility Physical Locations:	1501 Mile 8 N		
(city, state, zip code)	Rio Grande, Texas, 78582		
Mailing address:	5332 E. Highway 83		
(city, state, zip code)	Rio Grande City, TX 78582		
County/Parish:	Hidalgo County		
Facility Contact:	Gilberto Falcon	Mayor	
	(956) 487-0672		
FRS Number:			
Identification/Permit Number:	TX0068764/TXR05FH33		
Media Number:			
NAICS:			
SIC:	4952		
Personnel participating in inspection:			
Michael Williams	EPA/ 6EN-WMH	Inspector	281-983-2150
Ruben Salinas	City of Rio Grande	Public Utilities Director	956-487-2702
EPA Lead Inspector Signature/Date			
	Michael D. Williams		Date
Supervisor Signature/Date			
	Roberto Bernier		Date

Section I - Introduction

PURPOSE OF THE INSPECTION

EPA Region 6 inspector, Michael Williams, arrived at the City of Rio Grande Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) at 9:45 am on January 29, 2026, for an announced National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) inspection. During the opening conference, I met Rubin Salinas, the Public Utilities Director. Mr. Salinas was informed that this was an EPA lead compliance evaluation inspection to determine compliance with the facility's NPDES permit TX0068764 and Stormwater permit TXR05GH33, facility operations and maintenance requirements under the Clean Water Act (CWA). The inspection was conducted under the authority of the NPDES and Stormwater General permit programs, in accordance with the Federal CWA.

The information presented in this report is based on the materials and information supplied by the City of Rio Grande representatives, observations made during the inspection, and records or reports maintained by the permittee, permittee contract laboratory, the State of Texas and EPA.

FACILITY DESCRIPTIONS (TX0068764)

The City of Rio Grande wastewater treatment plant is designed to treat an average daily flow of 1.5 million gallons per day (MGD). The city plans to expand the plant to 1.9 MGD. Influent enters the facility at the headworks, where preliminary treatment is provided through both mechanical and manual bar screens to remove large debris and protect downstream equipment.

Following screening, the influent is conveyed to two parallel racetrack-style oxidation ditches, which serve as the biological treatment process. Within the oxidation ditches, wastewater is aerated and mixed to promote the growth of microorganisms that biologically degrade organic matter and reduce biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and suspended solids.

The mixed liquor from the oxidation ditches then flows to one of two secondary clarifiers, where solids separation occurs. In the clarifiers, biological solids settle to the bottom, forming sludge, while clarified effluent rises to the surface for further treatment. A portion of the settled sludge is returned to the headworks or process stream as needed, while excess sludge (waste activated sludge) is discharged directly to the six drying beds for dewatering and final solids handling.

The clarified effluent is then routed to a chlorine contact chamber, where disinfection is achieved through chlorination to inactivate pathogenic organisms. The treated and disinfected effluent is discharged to Outfall 001.

Dewatered biosolids generated at the facility are transported off-site for disposal.

Section II- Observations

This inspection revealed the following observations for TX0021547:

- Mechanical Bar Screen Out of Service
At the time of the inspection, the mechanical bar screen was not operational. Facility personnel indicated that the unit has been out of service since August 2025.
- Oxidation Ditches
Both oxidation ditches were in operation at the time of the inspection; however, each basin exhibited a noticeable accumulation of surface foam. The characteristics and persistence of the foam were indicative of elevated oil and grease concentrations in the influent as stated by facility personnel, which appeared to be contributing to the observed conditions within the treatment process.
- No Holding Tank or Digester
The existing facility design limits operational flexibility for managing solids inventory within the treatment system. The sludge wasting is constrained by the capacity and availability of the drying beds, which serve as the primary solids handling method. During periods when the drying beds are at capacity, as well as during extended rainfall events or colder months when drying efficiency is reduced, the facility's ability to waste solids is significantly restricted, resulting in intermittent or delayed sludge removal.
- Not documenting time of sampling and analysis
During the inspection, it was observed that the facility did not document the actual collection times for grab samples or the corresponding analysis of pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), and chlorine. Instead, the facility relies on a pre-stamped sampling log indicating 8:00 AM, 12:00 PM, and 3:00 PM. Operators reported that samples are not consistently collected or analyzed at these exact times. As a result, the accuracy of recorded data cannot be verified, and the required holding times for sample integrity are uncertain.

Section III- Areas of Concern

This inspection revealed the following areas of concern for TX0021547:

- During the inspection, it was noted that the pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), and chlorine grab samples collected for the months of September, October, and November 2025 could not be validated to confirm compliance with required holding times. Accurate documentation of sample collection times is necessary to ensure adherence to holding time requirements as specified in 40 CFR Part 136 – Guidelines Establishing Test Procedures for the Analysis of Pollutants. Without recorded times, there is no verification that samples were analyzed within the regulatory holding periods,

potentially compromising data integrity and compliance with permit monitoring requirements.

Section IV – Stormwater TXR05FH33 Observations & Areas of Concern

- The City of Rio Grande obtained coverage under the Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) Multi-Sector General Permit for Industrial Stormwater, which became effective on November 12, 2021.

At the time of the inspection, the facility maintained a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWP3) on-site. The plan was available for review and appeared to be complete and properly maintained. Key elements of the SWP3 were documented and implemented, including the facility's organizational structure and responsible personnel, employee training program, routine monthly facility inspections, quarterly visual monitoring of stormwater discharges, rainfall monitoring, and benchmark monitoring data.

Records reviewed during the inspection indicated that these compliance activities were current and maintained in accordance with permit requirements. Additionally, the Best Management Practices (BMPs) outlined in the SWP3 appeared to be implemented effectively and were functioning as intended to minimize potential pollutant discharges in stormwater runoff from the facility.

Section V – LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Photos

Appendix A

Photograph Log



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Photograph Log

Photo No. 1

Location: City of Rio Grande		
City: Rio Grande	County/Parish: Hidalgo	State: Texas



Bar Screen



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Photograph Log

Photo No. 2

Location: City of Rio Grande		
City: Rio Grande	County/Parish: Hidalgo	State: Texas



Oxidation Ditch



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Photograph Log

Photo No. 3

Location: City of Rio Grande		
City: Rio Grande	County/Parish: Hidalgo	State: Texas



Oxidation Ditch



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Photograph Log

Photo No. 4

Location: City of Rio Grande		
City: Rio Grande	County/Parish: Hidalgo	State: Texas



Clarifier



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Photograph Log

Photo No. 5

Location: City of Rio Grande		
City: Rio Grande	County/Parish: Hidalgo	State: Texas



Clarifier #2



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Photograph Log

Photo No. 6

Location: City of Rio Grande		
City: Rio Grande	County/Parish: Hidalgo	State: Texas



Drying Beds



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Photograph Log

Photo No. 7

Location: City of Rio Grande		
City: Rio Grande	County/Parish: Hidalgo	State: Texas



Drying Beds



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Photograph Log

Photo No. 8

Location: City of Rio Grande		
City: Rio Grande	County/Parish: Hidalgo	State: Texas



Chlorine Chamber



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Photograph Log

Photo No. 9

Location: City of Rio Grande		
City: Rio Grande	County/Parish: Hidalgo	State: Texas



Chlorine Chamber