

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE & INSPECTION**

IN RE: Christopher Paul Ferland

FILE NO.: OCI-OWTS-23-74

NOTICE OF VIOLATION

A. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Sections 42-17.1-2(21) and 42-17.6-3 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended, (“R.I. Gen. Laws”) you are hereby notified that the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (“Director” of “RIDEM”) has reasonable grounds to believe that the above-named party (“Respondent”) has violated certain statutes and/or administrative regulations under RIDEM's jurisdiction.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

On August 30, 2023, RIDEM issued a Notice of Intent to Enforce (“NIE”) by electronic mail to Respondent regarding the property and violations that are the subject of this Notice of Violation (“NOV”). Respondent did not respond to the NIE. On November 17, 2023, RIDEM issued a second NIE by certified mail and electronic mail to Respondent regarding the same property and violations that are the subject of the NOV. The NIE required Respondent to within 30 days either connect the plumbing for the dwelling on the property to public sewers or, if public sewers are not available, apply to RIDEM for a new OWTS and install the system within 120 days of RIDEM’s approval. On November 24, 2023, the NIE was delivered to Respondent. On November 28, 2023, Respondent had a telephone conversation with a RIDEM representative regarding the NIE and what he needed to do to comply with the NIE. On December 15, 2023, Respondent provide a pump out receipt for September 2023 and represented that he was in the process of getting quotes for a new septic tank. On December 18, 2023, and February 12, 2024, RIDEM received complaints of continued violation at the property. As of the date of the NOV, Respondent has failed to comply with the NIE.

C. FACTS

- (1) The property is located at 139 Lancaster Avenue, Assessor’s Plat 257, Lot 149 in Warwick, Rhode Island (“Property”). The Property includes a single-family dwelling.
- (2) Respondent owns the Property.
- (3) On August 17, 2023, RIDEM inspected the Property in response to a complaint. The inspection revealed that the onsite wastewater treatment system (“OWTS”) at the Property has failed, and wastewater was discharged from the OWTS to the surface of the ground as evidenced by:

- (a) Observation of and evidence of the prior breakout of fluids along with toilet paper and solids on the surface of the ground in the area around the OWTS.
 - (b) Photographs showing the evidence of the prior breakout of fluids along with toilet paper and solids on the surface of the ground in the area around the OWTS.
 - (c) Detection of odors associated with wastewater in the area around the OWTS.
- (4) On October 20, 2023, RIDEM inspected the Property in response to a complaint. The inspection revealed that the OWTS at the Property has failed, and wastewater was discharged from the OWTS to the surface of the ground as evidenced by:
- (a) Observation of and evidence of the breakout of fluids on the surface of the ground along with black soil in the area around the OWTS.
 - (b) Photographs showing the breakout of fluids on the surface of the ground along with black soil in the area around the OWTS.
 - (c) Detection of odors associated with wastewater in the area around the OWTS.
- (5) As of the date of the NOV, Respondent has failed to comply with Rhode Island's *Rules Establishing Minimum Standards Relating to Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems* (250-RICR-150-10-6) ("OWTS Rules").

D. VIOLATION

Based on the foregoing facts, the Director has reasonable grounds to believe that you have violated the following statutes and/or regulations:

- (1) **OWTS Rules**
- (a) **Part 6.9(E)** – prohibiting the use of a failed OWTS except in accordance with the requirements of an enforcement notice or order issued by RIDEM
 - (b) **Part 6.9(H)** – prohibiting the discharge of wastewater to the surface of the ground.
 - (c) **Part 6.18(G)** – requiring submittal of a repair application for a failed OWTS.

E. ORDER

Based upon the violations alleged above and pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws Section 42-17.1-2(21), you are hereby ORDERED to:

- (1) **IMMEDIATELY** have the OWTS pumped and take steps to reduce the discharge of wastewater to the OWTS, such as through the installation and use of water conservation devices and fixtures. **In addition, the OWTS must be pumped by a permitted septage transporter as frequently as necessary to prevent the OWTS from overflowing or breaking out onto the surface of the ground.** A list of permitted septage transporters can be obtained by contacting RIDEM's Office of Waste Management at 222-4700 or from RIDEM's web page at: www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/waste/transpor/septage.pdf.
- (2) **IMMEDIATELY** cease the use of any/all laundry washing machines located on the Property until the OWTS is replaced or the plumbing for the Property is connected to public sewers.
- (3) **Within 30 days of receipt of the NOV,** submit a written proposal for a permanent solution to the violation, that must include an inspection of the OWTS by a licensed OWTS designer to determine the cause of the failure (the "System Assessment"). The System Assessment must be signed by the licensed designer who inspected the OWTS, must identify the size and location of the OWTS components, must set forth the probable cause(s) for the failure, and propose a plan, including a proposed timetable, for any repair work for the correction of the failure. If it is determined that the OWTS needs repair and public sewers will not be available for connection within 1 year, a formal application and plan must be submitted to RIDEM in accordance with the OWTS Regulations (the "Application"). **Any repairs or modifications to the OWTS require the prior approval of RIDEM.** The list of licensed OWTS designers can be obtained by contacting general information at 222-3961 or from RIDEM's web page at: www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/licenses/OWTS/pdfs/deslist.pdf.
- (4) The Application shall be subject to RIDEM's review and approval. Upon review, RIDEM shall provide written notification either granting formal approval or stating the deficiencies therein. Within 14 days (unless a longer time is specified) of receiving a notification of deficiencies in the Application, submit to RIDEM a modified proposal or additional information necessary to correct the deficiencies.
- (5) Commence work on the project in accordance with the method approved by RIDEM within 20 days of approval (unless otherwise expressly authorized by RIDEM in writing to commence work at a later time) and complete such work within 120 days of said approval or other date specified by RIDEM.

F. PENALTY

- (1) Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws Section 42-17.6-2, the following administrative penalty, as more specifically described in the attached penalty summary and worksheets, is hereby ASSESSED, jointly and severally, against each named respondent:

\$3,400

- (2) The proposed administrative penalty is calculated pursuant to Rhode Island's *Rules and Regulations for Assessment of Administrative Penalties* (250-RICR-130-00-1) ("Penalty Rules") and must be paid to RIDEM within 30 days of your receipt of the NOV. Penalty payments shall be by one of two methods:
- (a) By certified check, cashier's check, or money order made payable to the **General Treasury – Water and Air Protection Program** and forwarded to:
- Administrator, RIDEM Office of Compliance and Inspection
235 Promenade Street, Suite 220
Providence, RI 02908-5767.
- (b) By wire transfer in accordance with instructions provided by RIDEM.
- (3) Penalties assessed against Respondent in the NOV are penalties payable to and for the benefit of the State of Rhode Island and are not compensation for actual pecuniary loss.
- (4) If any violation alleged herein shall continue, then each day during which the violation occurs or continues shall constitute a separate offense and the penalties and/or costs for that violation shall continue to accrue in the manner set forth in the attached penalty summary and worksheets. The accrual of additional penalties and costs shall be suspended if RIDEM determines that reasonable efforts have been made to comply promptly with the NOV.

G. RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING

- (1) Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws Chapters 42-17.1, 42-17.6, 42-17.7 and 42-35, each named respondent is entitled to request a hearing before RIDEM's Administrative Adjudication Division regarding the allegations, orders and/or penalties set forth in Sections B through F above. All requests for hearing MUST:
- (a) Be in writing. See R.I. Gen. Laws Sections 42-17.1-2(21)(i) and 42-17.6-4(b).
- (b) Be **RECEIVED** by RIDEM's Administrative Adjudication Division, at the following address, within 20 days of your receipt of the NOV. See R.I. Gen. Laws Sections 42-17.1-2(21)(i) and 42-17.7-9:

Administrative Clerk
RIDEM - Administrative Adjudication Division
235 Promenade Street, Room 350
Providence, RI 02908-5767.

- (c) Indicate whether you deny the alleged violations and/or whether you believe that the administrative penalty is excessive. See R.I. Gen. Laws Section 42-17.6-4(b).
 - (d) State clearly and concisely the specific issues which are in dispute, the facts in support thereof and the relief sought or involved, if any. See Part 1.7(B) of Rhode Island's *Rules and Regulations for the Administrative Adjudication Division* (250-RICR-10-00-1).
- (2) A copy of each request for hearing must also be forwarded to:
- Joseph J. LoBianco, Esq.
RIDEM - Office of Legal Services
235 Promenade Street, 4TH Floor
Providence, RI 02908-5767
- (3) Each named respondent has the right to be represented by legal counsel at all administrative proceedings relating to this matter.
 - (4) Each respondent must file a separate and timely request for an administrative hearing before RIDEM's Administrative Adjudication Division as to each violation alleged in the written NOV. If any respondent fails to request a hearing in the above-described time or manner regarding any violation set forth herein, then the NOV shall automatically become a Final Compliance Order enforceable in Superior Court as to that respondent and/or violation and any associated administrative penalty proposed in the NOV shall be final as to that respondent. See R.I. Gen. Laws Sections 42-17.1-2(21)(i) and (vi) and 42-17.6-4(b) and (c).
 - (5) Failure to comply with the NOV may subject each respondent to additional civil and/or criminal penalties.
 - (6) An original signed copy of the NOV is being forwarded to the City of Warwick, Rhode Island wherein the Property is located to be recorded in the Office of Land Evidence Records pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 34-13 and Section 42-17.1-2(13), as amended.
 - (7) The NOV does not preclude RIDEM from taking any additional enforcement action nor does it preclude any other local, state, or federal governmental entities from initiating enforcement actions based on the acts or omissions described herein.

If you have any legal questions, you may contact (or if you are represented by an attorney, please have your attorney contact) Joseph J. LoBianco of RIDEM's Office of Legal Services at (401) 537-4412 or at joseph.lobianco@dem.ri.gov. All other inquiries should be directed to Christina Hoefsmit of RIDEM's Office of Compliance and Inspection at (401) 537-4448 or at christina.hoefsmit@dem.ri.gov.

Please be advised that any such inquiries do not postpone, eliminate, or otherwise extend the need for a timely submittal of a written request for a hearing, as described in Section G above.

FOR THE DIRECTOR

By: _____
Christina Hoefsmit, Deputy Administrator
RIDEM Office of Compliance and Inspection

Dated: _____

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that on the _____ day of _____
the within Notice of Violation was forwarded to:

Christopher Paul Ferland
139 Lancaster Avenue
Warwick, RI 02886

by Certified Mail.



ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTY SUMMARY

Program: OWTS
 File No.: OCI-OWTS-23-74
 Respondent: Christopher Paul Ferland

GRAVITY OF VIOLATION					
SEE ATTACHED "PENALTY MATRIX WORKSHEETS."					
VIOLATION No. & CITATION	APPLICATION OF MATRIX		PENALTY CALCULATION		AMOUNT
	Type	Deviation	Penalty from Matrix	Number or Duration of Violations	
D(1)(b) – Discharge of Wastewater to Ground Surface	Type I (\$1,000 Max. Penalty) *	Major	\$1,000	2 violations	\$2,000
D(1)(c) – Failure to Apply to RIDEM to Repair Failed OWTS	Type I (\$1,000 Max. Penalty) *	Major	\$1,000	1 violation	\$1,000
SUB-TOTAL					\$3,000

*Maximum Penalties represent the maximum penalty amounts per day, per violation.

ECONOMIC BENEFIT FROM NONCOMPLIANCE		
COSTS OF COMPLIANCE, EQUIPMENT, O&M, STUDIES OR OTHER DELAYED OR AVOIDED COSTS, INCLUDING INTEREST AND/OR ANY COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE DERIVED OVER ENTITIES THAT COMPLY. NOTE: ECONOMIC BENEFIT MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE PENALTY UNLESS:		
- THERE IS NO IDENTIFIABLE BENEFIT FROM NONCOMPLIANCE, OR		
- THE AMOUNT OF ECONOMIC BENEFIT CAN NOT BE QUANTIFIED.		
DESCRIPTION OF BENEFIT	CALCULATION	AMOUNT
Cost of septic system pumping	2 occurrences @ \$200 each pumping	\$400
SUB-TOTAL		\$400

ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTY SUMMARY (continued)

COST RECOVERY

ADDITIONAL OR EXTRAORDINARY COSTS INCURRED BY THE DIRECTOR DURING THE INVESTIGATION, ENFORCEMENT AND RESOLUTION OF AN ENFORCEMENT ACTION (EXCLUDING NON-OVERTIME PERSONNEL COSTS), FOR WHICH THE STATE IS NOT OTHERWISE REIMBURSED.

A review of the record in this matter has revealed that RIDEM has not incurred any additional or extraordinary costs during the investigation, enforcement, and resolution of this enforcement action (excluding non-overtime personnel costs), for which the State is not otherwise reimbursed.

TOTAL PENALTY PROPOSED UNDER PENALTY RULES = \$3,400

PENALTY MATRIX WORKSHEET

CITATION: Discharge of Wastewater to Ground Surface

VIOLATION NO.: D (1)(a)

TYPE		
<u> X </u> TYPE I DIRECTLY related to protecting health, safety, welfare, or environment.	<u> </u> TYPE II INDIRECTLY related to protecting health, safety, welfare, or environment.	<u> </u> TYPE III INCIDENTAL to protecting health, safety, welfare, or environment.
DEVIATION FROM THE STANDARD THE DEGREE TO WHICH A VIOLATION IS OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENT VIOLATED.		
<p><u>FACTORS CONSIDERED:</u></p> <p>Taken from Part 1.10(A)(1)(b) of the Penalty Rules.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The extent to which the act or failure to act was out of compliance: Wastewater was discharged to the ground surface from a failed OWTS. Preventing the discharge of wastewater to the surface of the ground is a primary objective of the regulations and a major objective of the regulatory program. (2) Environmental conditions: The Property includes a single-family home in a densely populated neighborhood. (3) Amount of the pollutant: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (4) Toxicity or nature of the pollutant: Wastewater contains many kinds of bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can cause serious or fatal diseases in both humans and animals, as well as being the source of extremely objectionable odors. (5) Duration of the violation: Full duration unknown – at least two occasions. RIDEM’s inspections on August 17, 2023, and October 20, 2023, revealed evidence of wastewater breakout to the surface of the ground. (6) Areal extent of the violation: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (7) Whether the person took reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent and/or mitigate the noncompliance: Respondent failed to have the system pumped as necessary to prevent discharge to the ground surface. (8) Whether the person has previously failed to comply with any regulations, order, statute, license, permit, or approval issued or adopted by RIDEM, or any law which RIDEM has the authority or responsibility to enforce: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (9) The degree of willfulness or negligence, including but not limited to, how much control the violator had over the occurrence of the violation and whether the violation was foreseeable: Respondent had full control over the violation. The violation was foreseeable. (10) Any other factor(s) that may be relevant in determining the amount of a penalty: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. 		
<u> X </u> MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR

Penalty Matrix where the applicable statute provides for a civil penalty up to \$1,000		TYPE I	TYPE II	TYPE III
DEVIATION FROM STANDARD	MAJOR	\$800 to \$1,000 \$1,000	\$600 to \$800	\$400 to \$600
	MODERATE	\$600 to \$800	\$400 to \$600	\$200 to \$400
	MINOR	\$400 to \$600	\$200 to \$400	\$100 to \$200

PENALTY MATRIX WORKSHEET

CITATION: Failure to Apply to RIDEM to Repair Failed OWTS

VIOLATION NO.: D (1)(b)

TYPE		
<p style="text-align: center;"><u> X </u> TYPE I</p> <p><u>DIRECTLY</u> related to protecting health, safety, welfare, or environment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">___TYPE II</p> <p><u>INDIRECTLY</u> related to protecting health, safety, welfare, or environment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">___TYPE III</p> <p><u>INCIDENTAL</u> to protecting health, safety, welfare, or environment.</p>
DEVIATION FROM THE STANDARD		
<small>THE DEGREE TO WHICH A VIOLATION IS OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENT VIOLATED.</small>		
<p><u>FACTORS CONSIDERED:</u></p> <p>Taken from Part 1.10(A)(1)(b) of the Penalty Rules.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The extent to which the act or failure to act was out of compliance: Respondent failed to submit a repair application for the failed OWTS. The repair of a failed OWTSs is a primary objective of the regulations and a major objective of the regulatory program. (2) Environmental conditions: The Property includes a single-family home in a densely populated neighborhood. (3) Amount of the pollutant: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (4) Toxicity or nature of the pollutant: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (5) Duration of the violation: Full duration unknown —at least approximately 6 months. The violation was first observed by RIDEM on August 17, 2023. (6) Areal extent of the violation: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (7) Whether the person took reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent and/or mitigate the noncompliance: Respondent failed to take reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent and/or mitigate the noncompliance by retaining a licensed OWTS designer to prepare and submit a repair application despite receiving the NIE, which required that he do so. (8) Whether the person has previously failed to comply with any regulations, order, statute, license, permit, or approval issued or adopted by RIDEM, or any law which RIDEM has the authority or responsibility to enforce: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (9) The degree of willfulness or negligence, including but not limited to, how much control the violator had over the occurrence of the violation and whether the violation was foreseeable: Respondent had full control over the violation. Respondent is fully aware of the necessary actions to correct the violation. (10) Any other factor(s) that may be relevant in determining the amount of a penalty: The NIE stated the penalty could be up to \$1,000 per day. 		
<p><u> X </u> MAJOR</p>	<p>MODERATE</p>	<p>MINOR</p>

Penalty Matrix where the applicable statute provides for a civil penalty up to \$1,000		TYPE I	TYPE II	TYPE III
DEVIATION FROM STANDARD	MAJOR	\$800 to \$1,000 \$1,000	\$600 to \$800	\$400 to \$600
	MODERATE	\$600 to \$800	\$400 to \$600	\$200 to \$400
	MINOR	\$400 to \$600	\$200 to \$400	\$100 to \$200