

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

**OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE & INSPECTION**

**IN RE: Doris M. O'Brien Life Estate et als**

**FILE NO.: CI09-54**

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 Department of Environmental Management (the "Director" of "DEM") has reasonable grounds to believe that the above-named parties ("Respondents") have violated certain statutes and/or administrative regulations under DEM's jurisdiction.

B. Administrative History

DEM issued an informal notice to the Respondents on July 13, 2009. The Respondents failed to comply with the notice.

C. Facts

- (1) The subject property is located at 9 Owen Drive, Assessor's Plat 24, Lot 140 in the Town of Cumberland, Rhode Island (the "Property").
- (2) The Property is owned by the Life Estate of Doris M. O'Brien et als.
- (3) DEM inspected the Property on June 29, 2009. The inspection revealed that the onsite wastewater treatment system ("OWTS") at the Property has failed and sewage was discharged from the OWTS to the surface of the ground as evidenced by:
  - (a) Observation of lush green vegetation, black soil, and ponding or breakout of fluids on the surface of the ground in the area around the OWTS.
  - (b) Detection of odors associated with sewage in the area around the OWTS.
  - (c) Photographs showing black soil and ponding or breakout of fluids on the surface of the ground in the area around the OWTS.
- (4) As of the date of this Notice of Violation ("NOV"), the Respondents have failed to comply with the DEM regulations.

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) DEM Rules Establishing Minimum Standards Relating to Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems
  - (a) **Rule 8.8** – prohibiting the discharge of wastewater to the surface of the ground.
  - (b) **Rule 17.7** – 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** take steps to reduce the discharge of sewage to the OWTS, such as through the installation and use of water conservation devices and fixtures, and arrange to have the OWTS 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 the DEM Office of Water Resources - OWTS Permitting at 222-6820 or from the DEM web page at: [www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/waste/transport/septage.pdf](http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/waste/transport/septage.pdf).
- (2) **Within forty-five (45) days of receipt of this 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. For any proposed repair or alteration to the OWTS, the system assessment must include the submittal of a formal application and plan to the DEM Office of Water Resources - OWTS Permitting in accordance with the DEM Rules Establishing Minimum Standards Relating to Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (the “Application”). **Any repairs or modifications to the OWTS require the prior approval of DEM.** The list of licensed OWTS designers can be obtained by contacting Deb Knauss at 222-4700, Ext. 7612 or from the DEM web page at: [www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/licenses/OWTS/pdfs/deslist.pdf](http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/licenses/OWTS/pdfs/deslist.pdf).
- (3) The Application shall be subject to DEM review and approval. Upon review, the DEM shall provide written notification to you either granting formal approval or stating the deficiencies therein. Within fourteen days (unless a longer time is specified) of receiving a notification of deficiencies in the Application, you must

submit to the DEM a modified proposal or additional information necessary to correct the deficiencies.

- (4) Commence work on the project in accordance with the method approved by the Director within twenty days of approval (unless otherwise expressly authorized by the Director in writing to commence work at a later time), and complete such work within one hundred twenty days of said approval or other date specified by the Director.

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:

**One Thousand Four Hundred Dollars (\$1,400.00)**

- (2) The proposed administrative penalty is calculated pursuant to the DEM Rules and Regulations for Assessment of Administrative Penalties, as amended, and must be paid to the Director within twenty (20) days of your receipt of this NOV. Payment shall be in the form of a certified check or money order made payable to the “General Treasury - Water & Air Protection Program Account,” and shall be forwarded to the DEM Office of Compliance and Inspection, 235 Promenade Street, Suite 220, Providence, Rhode Island 02908-5767.
- (3) Penalties assessed against the respondents in this 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 the Director determines that reasonable efforts have been made to comply promptly with this 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 the DEM 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 DEM's Administrative Adjudication Division, at the following address, within twenty days of your receipt of this NOV. See R.I. Gen. Laws Sections 42-17.1-2(21)(i) and 42-17.7-9:

Administrative Clerk  
DEM - Administrative Adjudication Division  
235 Promenade Street, 3<sup>RD</sup> Floor  
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); **AND**
- (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 Rule 7.00(b) of the DEM Administrative Rules of Practice and Procedure for the Administrative Adjudication Division of Environmental Matters.
- (2) A copy of each request for hearing must also be forwarded to:
- Richard M. Bianculli, Jr., Esquire  
DEM - Office of Legal Services  
235 Promenade Street, 4<sup>TH</sup> 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 DEM'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 with regard to any violation set forth herein, then this 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 (v) and 42-17.6-4(b) and (c).
- (5) Failure to comply with this NOV may subject each respondent to additional civil and/or criminal penalties.
- (6) An original signed copy of this NOV is being forwarded to the Town of Cumberland 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 42-17.1-2(13), as amended.
- (7) This NOV does not preclude the Director 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) Richard M. Bianculli, Jr. at the DEM Office of Legal Services at (401) 222-6607. All other inquiries should be directed to Craig Mac Laughlin of the DEM Office of Compliance and Inspection at (401) 222-1360 ext. 7117.

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

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David E. Chopy, Chief  
DEM Office of Compliance and Inspection

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CERTIFICATION

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

Doris M. O'Brien Life Estate et als  
C/o Kathleen A. & John F. O'Brien  
9 Owen Drive  
Cumberland, RI 02864

by Certified Mail.

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# ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTY SUMMARY

Program: OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE AND INSPECTION, OWTS  
 File No.: CI09-54  
 Respondents: Doris M. O'Brien Life Estate et als

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)(a)– Discharge of sewage to the surface of the ground	Type I (\$1,000 Max. Penalty)*	Moderate	\$600	1	\$600.00
D(1)(b) - Failure to submit an application for a failed OWTS	Type I (\$1,000 Max. Penalty)*	Moderate	\$600	1	\$600.00
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>					<b>\$1,200.00</b>

\*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 ARE IN COMPLIANCE. 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	single occurrence @ \$200 each pumping	\$200.00
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>		<b>\$200.00</b>

**TOTAL PENALTY PROPOSED UNDER PENALTY REGULATIONS = \$1,400.00**

# PENALTY MATRIX WORKSHEET

CITATION: Discharge of sewage to the surface of the ground  
 VIOLATION NO.: D(1)(a)

TYPE		
<u>X</u> TYPE I DIRECTLY related to protecting health, safety, welfare or environment.	___ TYPE II INDIRECTLY related to protecting health, safety, welfare or environment.	___ TYPE III INCIDENTAL to protecting health, safety, welfare or environment.
DEVIATION FROM THE STANDARD THE DEGREE TO WHICH A PARTICULAR VIOLATION IS OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENT VIOLATED.		
<p><b>FACTORS CONSIDERED:</b>            Taken from Section 10(a)(2) of the DEM <i>Rules and Regulations for Assessment of Administrative Penalties</i></p> <p>(A) <b>The extent to which the act or failure to act was out of compliance:</b> Sewage was discharged to the ground surface from a failed OWTS. Preventing the discharge of sewage to the surface of the ground is a primary objective of the regulations and a major objective of the regulatory program.</p> <p>(B) <b>Environmental conditions:</b> The dwelling is a 3-bedroom residence in a moderately populated neighborhood.</p> <p>(C) <b>Amount of the pollutant:</b> The volume of the sewage overflow is unknown.</p> <p>(D) <b>Toxicity or nature of the pollutant:</b> Sewage 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.</p> <p>(E) <b>Duration of the violation:</b> The total duration of the discharge is unknown. Evidence of the violation was observed on June 29, 2009.</p> <p>(F) <b>Areal extent of the violation:</b> Unknown.</p> <p>(G) <b>Whether the person took reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent and/or mitigate the noncompliance:</b> The Respondents failed to have the system pumped as necessary to prevent discharge to the ground surface.</p> <p>(H) <b>Whether the person has previously failed to comply with any regulations, order, statute, license, permit or approval issued or adopted by the Department, or any law which the Department has the authority or responsibility to enforce:</b> Not relevant.</p> <p>(I) <b>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:</b> The Respondents had full control over the violation. The violation was foreseeable.</p> <p>(J) <b>Any other factor(s) that may be relevant in determining the amount of a penalty:</b> The notice issued on July 13, 2009 stated the penalty could be up to \$1,000.00 per violation.</p>		
MAJOR	<u>X</u> 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	\$600 to \$800	\$400 to \$600
	<b>MODERATE</b>	\$600 to \$800 <b>\$600</b>	\$400 to \$600	\$200 to \$400
	MINOR	\$400 to \$600	\$200 to \$400	\$100 to \$200

# PENALTY MATRIX WORKSHEET

CITATION: Failure to submit an application for a 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		
THE DEGREE TO WHICH A PARTICULAR VIOLATION IS OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENT VIOLATED.		
<p><b><u>FACTORS CONSIDERED:</u></b></p> <p>Taken from Section 10 (a) (2) of the DEM <i>Rules and Regulations for Assessment of Administrative Penalties</i></p> <p>(A) <b>The extent to which the act or failure to act was out of compliance:</b> The Respondents failed to submit a repair application for the failed septic system. The repair of failed septic systems is a primary objective of the regulations and a major objective of the regulatory program.</p> <p>(B) <b>Environmental conditions:</b> The dwelling is a 3-bedroom residence in a moderately populated neighborhood.</p> <p>(C) <b>Amount of the pollutant:</b> Not relevant.</p> <p>(D) <b>Toxicity or nature of the pollutant:</b> Not relevant</p> <p>(E) <b>Duration of the violation:</b> The total duration of the violation is unknown, but is at least 11 months.</p> <p>(F) <b>Areal extent of the violation:</b> Not relevant.</p> <p>(G) <b>Whether the person took reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent and/or mitigate the noncompliance:</b> The Respondents failed to retain a licensed designer to evaluate the system and prepare and submit a repair application despite receiving notice from DEM on July 13, 2009 requiring that they do so</p> <p>(H) <b>Whether the person has previously failed to comply with any regulations, order, statute, license, permit or approval issued or adopted by the Department, or any law which the Department has the authority or responsibility to enforce:</b> Not relevant.</p> <p>(I) <b>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:</b> The Respondents had full control over the violation. The Respondents are fully aware of the necessary actions to correct the violation.</p> <p>(J) <b>Any other factor(s) that may be relevant in determining the amount of a penalty:</b> The notice issued on July 13, 2009 stated the penalty could be up to \$1,000.00 per day for each violation.</p>		
MAJOR	<u>  X  </u> MODERATE	MINOR

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