



---

## North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

August 16, 2021

Certified Mail 7016 2070 0000 6486 2180

Mr. Scott Herman, Utilities Superintendent  
City of Willits  
3920 Canyon Road  
Willits, CA 95490  
[sherman@cityofwillits.org](mailto:sherman@cityofwillits.org)

Dear Mr. Herman:

Subject: **Order No. R1-2021-0035, OFFER TO PARTICIPATE IN EXPEDITED PAYMENT PROGRAM RELATING TO VIOLATIONS OF ORDER No. R1-2015-0029 (NPDES PERMIT No. CA0023060)**

File: City of Willits, WDID No. 1B80078OMEN

The purpose of this expedited payment letter is to notify the City of Willits (hereinafter "Permittee" or "you") of alleged violations of the California Water Code (Water Code) identified in the State Water Resources Control Board's (State Water Board) water quality data system and to allow the Permittee to participate in the Expedited Payment Program for Effluent and/or Reporting Violations (Expedited Payment Program) to address liability which may be assessed pursuant to Water Code sections 13385 and 13385.1.

### **NOTICE OF VIOLATION:**

Based on information in the California Integrated Water Quality System (CIWQS) from January 5, 2017 through March 31, 2021, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) alleges that the Permittee has violated the effluent limitations identified in the Notice of Violation (NOV) attached as Exhibit "A". The Permittee shall pay the Expedited Payment Amount of \$6,000.00. The Permittee will have the opportunity to address the alleged violations as discussed below.

### **STATUTORY LIABILITY:**

Subdivisions (h) and (i) of Water Code section 13385 require the assessment of a MANDATORY MINIMUM PENALTY of \$3,000 for specified serious and chronic effluent limit violations. The Permittee is subject to discretionary administrative civil liabilities of up to TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$10,000) for each day in which the violation occurs, plus TEN DOLLARS (\$10) for each gallon discharged but not cleaned up in excess of

---

GREGORY A. GIUSTI, CHAIR | MATTHIAS ST. JOHN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

1,000 gallons. These mandatory minimum penalties and discretionary administrative civil liabilities may be assessed by a Regional Water Quality Control Board or the State Water Board (collectively “the Water Boards”), beginning with the date that the violation first occurred. The formal enforcement action which the Water Boards use to assess such liability is an administrative civil liability complaint, although the Water Boards may instead refer such matters to the Attorney General’s Office. If referred to the Attorney General, the Superior Court may assess up to TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$25,000) per violation. In addition, the Superior Court may assess up to TWENTY FIVE DOLLARS (\$25) per gallon discharged but not cleaned up in excess of 1,000 gallons.

**OFFER TO PARTICIPATE IN EXPEDITED PAYMENT PROGRAM:**

The Permittee can avoid the issuance of a formal enforcement action and settle the alleged violation identified in the attached NOV by participating in the Expedited Payment Program. Details of the proposed settlement are described below and addressed in the enclosed documents.

To promote resolution of this violation, the Regional Water Board makes this Conditional Offer. The Permittee may accept this offer, waive the Permittee’s right to a hearing, and pay the mandatory minimum penalty as indicated on Exhibit A, for the violation described in the NOV. If the Permittee elects to do so, subject to the conditions below, the Regional Water Board will accept that payment in settlement of any enforcement action that would otherwise arise out of the violation identified in the NOV. Accordingly, the Regional Water Board will forgo issuance of a formal administrative complaint, will not refer the violation to the Attorney General, and will waive its right to seek additional discretionary civil liabilities for the violation identified in the NOV. Resolution of this violation by the State Water Board will preclude Regional Water Board action for this same violation.

The Expedited Payment Program does not address or resolve liability for any violation that is not specifically identified in the NOV regardless of the date that the violation occurred.

**PERMITTEE’S OPTIONS FOR RESPONSE TO OFFER:**

If you accept this offer, please complete and return the enclosed “Acceptance of Conditional Resolution and Waiver of Right to Hearing, (proposed) Order” (Acceptance and Waiver) on or before thirty (30) days from the date of this letter. The Acceptance and Waiver will be held, **pending a 30-day public notice period**, and then will be counter-signed by the Executive Officer and returned to you with an invoice for payment.

If the Permittee chooses to contest the violation alleged in the NOV, please identify the basis for the challenge (factual error, affirmative defense, etc.) on or before the due date specified above. The Regional Water Board staff will evaluate the contested violation and take one of two actions:

- 1) The Regional Water Board staff will determine that the violation is not supported, expunge the alleged violation from the CIWQS data base, take no further action against the Permittee for the alleged violation, and notify the Permittee of that determination. The Permittee will be given thirty (30) days from the date of receipt of the Regional Water Board staff determination to complete and return an Acceptance and Waiver for the remainder of the violations; or
- 2) The Regional Water Board staff will determine that the alleged violation is valid and will notify the Permittee of that determination. The Permittee will be given thirty (30) days from the date of receipt of the Regional Water Board staff determination, to complete and return the Acceptance and Waiver.

If the Permittee chooses not to make a payment in response to the Regional Water Board staff's determination, the Permittee should expect to be contacted regarding formal enforcement action that will be initiated regarding the contested violation. In a formal enforcement action, the liability amount sought and/or imposed may exceed the liability amount set forth in this Conditional Offer. Moreover, the cost of enforcement is a factor which can be considered in assessing the liability amount.

**CONDITIONS FOR REGIONAL WATER BOARD ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION:**

Federal regulations require the Regional Water Board to publish and allow the public thirty (30) days to comment on any settlement of an enforcement action addressing NPDES permit violations (40 C.F.R. section 123.27(d)(2)(iii)). Upon receipt of the Permittee's Acceptance and Waiver, Regional Water Board staff will post a notice of the proposed resolution of the violations at:

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/public\\_notices/notice\\_of\\_proposed\\_settlement/](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/public_notices/notice_of_proposed_settlement/)

If no comments are received within the 30-day period, and unless there are new material facts that become available to the Regional Water Board, the Executive Officer will execute the Acceptance and Waiver as a stipulated order assessing the uncontested mandatory minimum penalty amount pursuant to Water Code section 13385.

If, however, significant comments are received in opposition to the settlement, this Offer may be withdrawn and the Permittee's waiver pursuant to the Acceptance and Waiver will also be treated as withdrawn. In that case, the unresolved violation will be addressed in a formal enforcement hearing. At the hearing the Permittee will be free to make arguments as to the alleged violation, and the Permittee's agreement to accept this conditional offer will not in any way be binding or used as evidence against the Permittee. The Permittee will be provided with further information on the liability assessment proceeding.

In the event the Acceptance and Waiver is executed by the Executive Officer, the Conditional Offer becomes a final order and payment of the assessed amount shall be due and payable as specified in the invoice that will accompany the Permittee's notice of the final order. Payment is due thirty (30) days after the order is finalized. Failure to pay the penalty within the required time period may subject the Permittee to further liability.

Should you have any questions about the EPL or the Conditional Offer, please contact Zane Stromberg at [Zane.Stromberg@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Zane.Stromberg@waterboards.ca.gov) or Diana Henrioulle at [Diana.Henrioulle@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Diana.Henrioulle@waterboards.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

**Claudia E. Villacorta**  
Digitally signed by  
Claudia E. Villacorta  
Date: 2021.08.16  
12:13:19 -07'00'

Claudia Villacorta, P.E.  
Assistant Executive Officer

210816\_ZS\_er\_WCWWTP\_Willits\_City\_EPL\_Offer

Attachment: Exhibit A MMP for CA0023060

Enclosure: R1-2021-0035 Willits City EPL Offer

Certified Mail – Return Receipt requested

cc: Diana Henrioulle; [Diana.Henrioulle@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Diana.Henrioulle@waterboards.ca.gov)



NCRWQCB

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

SEP 01 2021

EXPEDITED PAYMENT LETTER
NOTICE OF VIOLATION
ACCEPTANCE OF CONDITIONAL RESOLUTION
AND WAIVER OF RIGHT TO HEARING
Order No. R1-2021-0035

Checkboxes for EO, AEO, Reg/NPS, WMgmt, Timber, Cleanups, Admin, Legal, and Date.

City of Willits
ORDER NO. R1-2015-0029
NPDES NO. CA0023060
WDID No. 1B80078OMEN

By signing below and returning this Acceptance of Conditional Resolution and Waiver of Right to Hearing (Acceptance and Waiver) to the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board), The City of Willits hereby accepts the "Offer to Participate in Expedited Payment Program" and waives the right to a hearing before the Regional Water Board to dispute the allegations of violations described in the Notice of Violation (NOV) which is attached hereto as Exhibit "A" and incorporated herein by reference.

The Permittee agrees that the NOV shall serve as a complaint pursuant to Article 2.5 of the California Water Code (Water Code) and that no separate complaint is required for the Regional Water Board to assert jurisdiction over the alleged violations through its Assistant Executive Officer. The Permittee agrees to pay the penalties authorized by Water Code section 13385, as indicated on the attached NOV Exhibit "A" under "Expedited Payment Amount" (which shall be deemed payment in full of any civil liability pursuant to the Water Code sections 13385 and 13385.1 that otherwise might be assessed for the violations described in the NOV.

The Permittee understands that once the Acceptance and Waiver is executed by the Executive Officer of the Regional Water Board, the full payment required by the deadline indicated in the invoice to follow is a condition of this Acceptance and Waiver. The Permittee shall pay the Expedited Payment Amount of \$6,000.00 by check payable to the SWRCB Cleanup and Abatement Account, referencing "R1-2021-0035".

The Permittee understands that this Acceptance and Waiver does not address or resolve liability for any violation that is not specifically identified in the Notice of Violation.

GREGORY A. GIUSTI, CHAIR | MATTHIAS ST. JOHN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

R1-2021-0035  
City of Willits  
Acceptance and Waiver

Upon execution by the Permittee, the Acceptance and Waiver shall be returned to:

Diana Henriouille, Senior Water Resource Control Engineer  
California Regional Water Quality Control Board  
North Coast Region  
5550 Skylane Blvd, Suite A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

The Permittee understands that federal regulations set forth at title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, section 123.27(d)(2)(iii) require the Regional Water Board to publish notice of and provide at least 30 days for public comment on any proposed resolution of an enforcement action. Accordingly, this Acceptance and Waiver, prior to execution by the Executive Officer, will be published as required by law for public comment.

If no comments are received within the notice period which causes the Executive Officer to reconsider the Acceptance and Waiver, the Executive Officer will execute the Acceptance and Waiver and it will become a final order.

The Permittee understands that if significant comments are received in opposition, the offer to resolve the violations set forth in the NOV may be withdrawn. In that circumstance, the Permittee will be advised of the withdrawal and an administrative civil liability complaint may be issued and the matter may be set for a hearing before the Regional Water Board. For such a hearing, the Permittee understands that this Acceptance and Waiver executed by the Permittee will be treated as a settlement communication and will not be used as evidence in that hearing.

The Permittee understands that once the Acceptance and Waiver is executed by the Executive Officer, the full payment is a condition of this Acceptance and Waiver. The payment shall be submitted to the Regional Water Board no later than the date indicated in the transmittal letter which will accompany the Acceptance and Waiver after execution by the Executive Officer.

R1-2021-0035  
City of Willits  
Acceptance and Waiver

I hereby affirm that I am duly authorized to act on behalf of and to bind the Permittee in the making and giving of this Acceptance and Waiver.

City of Willits  
(Name of Permittee)

By:  8-30-21  
(Signed Name) (Date)

SCOTT HERMA  
(Printed or typed name)

PUBLIC WORK DIRECTOR  
(Title)

IT IS SO ORDERED PURSUANT TO WATER CODE SECTION 13385

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Matthias St. John  
Executive Officer

21\_0035\_Willits\_City\_EPL\_Acceptance

Attachment: Exhibit A MMP for CA0023060

Mandatory Penalty Administrative Civil Liability

Willits City

Willits City WWTP

WDID No. 1B80078OMEN NPDES No. CA0023060

EXHIBIT "A"

**Effluent Limitations Violations Requiring Mandatory Minimum Penalties**

| # | Violation Number | Violation Date | Constituent            | Pollutant Group | Limitation Period | Limit | Result/Average | Units   | Exempted from MMP? | Exempt Reason | % Over Limit | Date 180 Days Prior | Serious or Chronic Violation? | No. of Violations within 180 days | Mandatory Fine? | Water Code | Penalty  |
|---|------------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------|----------------|---------|--------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------|----------|
| 1 | 1046657          | 6/13/2018      | Total Coliform         | Other           | Daily Maximum     | 230   | 540            | MPN/100 | Y                  | a             | 135%         | 12/15/2017          | C                             | Ct. 1                             | N               |            | \$ 0     |
| 2 | 1061459          | 05/08/2019     | pH                     | Other           | Daily Maximum     | 8.5   | 8.58           | SU      | Y                  | a             | 1%           | 11/09/2018          | C                             | Ct. 1                             | N               |            | \$ 0     |
| 3 | 1061455          | 05/10/2019     | pH                     | Other           | Daily Minimum     | 6.5   | 6.17           | SU      | Y                  | a             | -5%          | 11/11/2018          | C                             | Ct. 2                             | N               |            | \$ 0     |
| 4 | 1061456          | 05/15/2019     | Nitrogen, Total (as N) | Group 1         | Single Sample     | 1.6   | 6.5            | mg/L    | N                  |               | 306%         | 11/16/2018          | S                             | Ct. 3                             | Y               | 13385(i)   | \$ 3,000 |
| 5 | 1061457          | 05/15/2019     | Flow                   | Other           | Event Discharge   | 0     | 20000          | GPD     | N                  |               | N/A          | 11/16/2018          | C                             | > Ct. 3                           | Y               | 13385(i)   | \$ 3,000 |

**Total Penalty: \$ 6,000**

**Legend of Table**

a. The first three violations in a 180 day period shall not receive MMP assessment unless serious.

Ct. Count – The number that follows represents the number of exceedances in the past 180 days. A count > than Ct. 3 means that a penalty under Water Code Section 13385 (i) applies.

1 - Violation occurs on sample date or last date of averaging period.

2 - For Group I pollutants, a violation is serious when the limit is exceeded by 40% or more

- For Group II pollutants, a violation is serious when the limit is exceeded by 20% or more

3 - When a serious violation occurs on the same day as a chronic, the serious violation is only assessed an MMP once and is counted last for the day when determining the number of chronic violations to be assessed a penalty.

**Violation Period Between January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Group I Violations Assessed MMP:        | 1 |
| Group II Violations Assessed MMP:       | 0 |
| Other Effluent Violations Assessed MMP: | 1 |
| Violations Exempt from MMP:             | 3 |
| Total Violations Assessed MMP:          | 2 |

**Mandatory Minimum Penalty = (1 Serious Violations + 1 Non-Serious Violations) x \$3,000 = \$6,000**