



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Protection

Southwest District
13051 North Telecom Parkway #101
Temple Terrace, Florida 33637-0926

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Jay Collins
Lt. Governor

Alexis A. Lambert
Secretary

May 26, 2026

Martha Santiago, Chair
Polk County Board of County Commissioners
c/o Tamara Richardson, Director of Utilities
Polk County Utilities Division
200 Westview Drive
Davenport, FL 33837
tamararichardson@polk-county.net

SUBJECT: Department of Environmental Protection v. Polk County Utilities Division,
OGC File No.: 26-0462
Proposed Short Form Consent Agreement
FL0A00002 - Northeast Regional WWTF

Ms. Santiago:

The State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection ("Department") finds that The Polk County Utilities Division ("Respondent") had one unauthorized sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) totaling, 5,400,000 gallons of untreated wastewater. Surface water quality sampling for Horseshoe Creek and the surrounding wetland was conducted and indicated surface water quality impacts between November 22, 2025, through December 01, 2025. The SSO and surface water quality impacts are in violation of Section 403.161(1)(b), Florida Statutes ("F.S."), Rule 62-604.130(1), Rule 62-302.530(6)(b) and Rule 62-302.500(2)(e), Florida Administrative Code ("F.A.C."). Before sending this letter, the Department requested the Respondent undertake certain actions to resolve the violation. These actions have since been completed. However, due to the nature of the violation, the Respondent remains subject to civil penalties. The Respondent is also responsible for costs incurred by the Department during the investigation of this matter.

The Department's Offer

Based on the violations described above, the Department is seeking \$35,996.00 in civil penalties; \$1,853.00 in economic benefit; and \$250.00 for costs and expenses the Department

has incurred in investigating this matter. These total \$38,099.00. The civil penalty in this matter includes one violation of \$10,000.00 or more.

In lieu of making a cash payment of \$37,849.00 in penalties, Respondent may elect to offset this amount by implementing an in-kind penalty project, which must be approved by the Department. An in-kind project must be either an environmental enhancement, environmental restoration, or a capital/facility improvement project. The Department may also consider the donation of environmentally sensitive land as an in-kind project. The value of the in-kind penalty project shall be one and a half times the civil penalty offset amount, which in this case is the equivalent of at least **\$56,773.50**. If Respondent chooses to implement an in-kind project, Respondent shall notify the Department of its election by electronic mail to Hannah Teague at Hannah.Teague@FloridaDEP.gov within **15 days** of the effective date of this Consent Agreement.

Notwithstanding the election to implement an in-kind project, payment of the remaining \$250.00 in costs must be paid within 15 days of the execution date.

If Respondent elects to implement an in-kind project, then Respondent shall comply with all of the requirements and timeframes in Exhibit A entitled In-Kind Projects.

Respondent's Acceptance

If you wish to accept this offer and fully resolve the enforcement matter pending against the Respondent, please sign this letter and return it to the Department at Southwest District Office, 13051 Telecom Parkway North, Suite 101, Temple Terrace, Florida, 33637-0926 by **June 12, 2026**. The Department will then countersign it and file it with a designated clerk of the Department. Once the document is filed with the designated clerk, it will constitute a final Agreement of the Department pursuant to Section 120.52(7), F.S. and will be effective unless a request for an administrative hearing is filed by a third party in accordance with Chapter 120, F.S. and the attached Notice of Rights.

By accepting this offer you, Commissioner Martha Santiago:

- (1) certify that you are authorized and empowered to negotiate, enter into, and accept the terms of this offer in the name and on behalf of Respondent;
- (2) acknowledge and waive Respondent's right to an administrative hearing pursuant to Sections 120.569 and 120.57, F.S., on the terms of this offer, once final;
- (3) acknowledge and waive Respondent's right to an appeal pursuant to Section 120.68, F.S.; and

The Department acknowledges that the Respondent's acceptance of this offer does not constitute an admission of liability for the violation(s) referenced above.

Respondent's Performance

After signing and returning this document to the Department,

- (1) You must implement the In-Kind Project in accordance with the requirements identified in the attached Exhibit A. **Also, payment of \$250.00 for costs and expenses must be made within 15 days of the execution date.**

- (2) **If Respondent declines to implement an In-Kind Project, payment in full of \$38,099.00 is due within 60 days of the execution date.**

- (3) Respondent shall make all payments required by this Agreement by cashier's check, money Agreement or on-line payment. Cashier's check or money Agreement shall be made payable to the "Department of Environmental Protection" and shall include both the OGC number assigned to this Agreement and the notation "Water Quality Assurance Trust Fund." Online payments by e-check can be made by going to the DEP Business Portal at: <http://www.fldepportal.com/go/pay/>
It will take a number of days after this Agreement is final, effective and filed with the Clerk of the Department before ability to make online payment is available.

The Department may enforce the terms of this document, once final, and seek to collect monies owed pursuant to Sections 120.69 and 403.121, F.S.

Until clerked by the Department, this letter is only a settlement offer and not a final agency action. Consequently, neither the Respondent nor any other party may request an administrative hearing to contest this letter pursuant to Chapter 120, F.S. Once this letter is clerked and becomes a final Agreement of the Department, as explained above, the attached Notice of Rights will apply to parties, other than the Respondent, whose interests will be substantially affected.

Electronic signatures or other versions of the parties' signatures, such as .pdf or facsimile, shall be valid and have the same force and effect as originals. No modifications of the terms of this Agreement will be effective until reduced to writing, executed by both Respondent and the Department, and filed with the clerk of the Department.

Please be aware that if the Respondent declines to respond to the Department's offer, the Department will assume that the Respondent is not interested in resolving the matter and will proceed accordingly.

If you have any questions, please contact Hannah Teague at (813) 470-5727 or at Hannah.Teague@FloridaDEP.gov.

Sincerely,



Ms. Kelley M. Boatwright
District Director
Southwest District

FOR THE RESPONDENT:

I, _____ [Type or Print Name], **HEREBY ACCEPT THE
TERMS OF THE SETTLEMENT OFFER IDENTIFIED ABOVE.**

By: _____
[Signature]

Date: _____

Title: _____
[Type or Print]

FOR DEPARTMENT USE ONLY

DONE AND AGREED this ___ day of _____, 2026, in Hillsborough County, Florida.

STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT
OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Kelley M. Boatwright
District Director
Southwest District

Filed, on this date, pursuant to section 120.52, F.S., with the designated Department Clerk, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged.

Clerk

Date

Attachments: Notice of Rights
 Exhibit A

Final clerked copy furnished to:

Lea Crandall, Agency Clerk (lea.crandall@dep.state.fl.us)

NOTICE OF RIGHTS

Persons who are not parties to this Agreement, but whose substantial interests are affected by it, have a right to petition for an administrative hearing under Sections 120.569 and 120.57, Florida Statutes. Because the administrative hearing process is designed to formulate final agency action, the filing of a petition concerning this Agreement means that the Department's final action may be different from the position it has taken in the Agreement.

The petition for administrative hearing must contain all of the following information:

(a) The name and address of each agency affected and each agency's file or identification number, if known;

(b) The name, address, any e-mail address, any facsimile number, and telephone number of the petitioner, if the petitioner is not represented by an attorney or a qualified representative; the name, address, and telephone number of the petitioner's representative, if any, which shall be the address for service purposes during the course of the proceeding; and an explanation of how the petitioner's substantial interests will be affected by the agency determination;

(c) A statement of when and how the petitioner received notice of the agency decision;

(d) A statement of all disputed issues of material fact. If there are none, the petition must so indicate;

(e) A concise statement of the ultimate facts alleged, including the specific facts the petitioner contends warrant reversal or modification of the agency's proposed action;

(f) A statement of the specific rules or statutes the petitioner contends require reversal or modification of the agency's proposed action, including an explanation of how the alleged facts relate to the specific rules or statutes; and

(g) A statement of the relief sought by the petitioner, stating precisely the action petitioner wishes the agency to take with respect to the agency's proposed action.

The petition must be filed (received) at the Department's Office of General Counsel, 3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS# 35, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000 or received

via electronic correspondence at Agency_Clerk@floridadep.gov, within 21 days of receipt of this notice. A copy of the petition must also be mailed at the time of filing to the District Office at the address indicated above. Failure to file a petition within the 21-day period constitutes a person's waiver of the right to request an administrative hearing and to participate as a party to this proceeding under Sections 120.569 and 120.57, Florida Statutes. Mediation under Section 120.573, Florida Statutes, is not available in this proceeding.

Exhibit A

In-Kind Projects

I. Introduction

An in-kind project

a. Within 60 days of the effective date of this Consent Agreement, Respondent shall submit, either electronically or by certified mail, a detailed in-kind project proposal to the Department for evaluation. The proposal shall include a summary of benefits, proposed schedule for implementation and documentation of the estimated costs which are expected to be incurred to complete the project. These costs shall not include those incurred in developing the proposal or obtaining approval from the Department for the in-kind project.

b. If the Department requests additional information or clarification due to a partially incomplete in-kind project proposal or requests modifications due to deficiencies with Department guidelines, Respondent shall submit, either electronically or by certified mail, all requested additional information, clarification, and modifications within 15 days of receipts of written notice.

c. If upon review of the in-kind project proposal, the Department determines that the project cannot be accepted due to a substantially incomplete proposal or due to substantial deficiencies with minimum Department guidelines; Respondent shall be notified, in writing, of the reason(s) which prevent the acceptance of the proposal. Respondent shall correct and redress all of the matters at issue and submit, either electronically or by certified mail, a new proposal within 30 days of receipt of written notice. In the event that the revised proposal is not

approved by the Department, Respondent shall make cash payment of the civil penalties as set forth in the Consent Agreement within 30 days of Department notice.

d. Within 120 days of the effective date of this Consent Agreement, Respondent shall obtain approval for an in-kind project from the Department. If an in-kind project proposal is not approved by the Department within 120 days of the effective date of this Consent Agreement, then Respondent shall make cash payment of the civil penalties as set forth in the Consent Agreement, within 30 days of Department notice.

e. Within 180 days of obtaining Department approval for the in-kind proposal or in accordance with the approved schedule submitted pursuant to paragraph (a) above, Respondent shall complete the entire in-kind project.

f. During the implementation of the in-kind project, Respondent shall place appropriate sign(s) at the project site indicating that Respondent's involvement with the project is the result of a Department enforcement action. Respondent may remove the sign(s) after the project has been completed. However, after the project has been completed Respondent shall not post any sign(s) at the site indicating that the reason for the project was anything other than a Department enforcement action.

g. In the event, Respondent fails to timely submit any requested information to the Department, fails to complete implementation of the in-kind project or otherwise fails to comply with any provision of this paragraph, the in-kind penalty project option shall be forfeited and the entire amount of civil penalties shall be due from the Respondent to the Department within 30 days of Department notice. If the in-kind penalty project is terminated and Respondent timely remits the penalty, no additional penalties shall be assessed under the Consent Agreement for failure to complete the requirement of this paragraph.

h. Within 15 days of completing the in-kind project, Respondent shall notify the Department, either electronically or by certified mail, of the project completion and request a verification letter from the Department. Respondent shall submit supporting information verifying that the project was completed in accordance with the approved proposal and documentation showing the actual costs incurred to complete the project. These costs shall not include those incurred in developing the proposal or obtaining approval from the Department for the project.

i. If upon review of the notification of completion, the Department determines that the project cannot be accepted due to a substantially incomplete notification of completion or due to substantial deviations from the approved in-kind project; Respondent shall be notified, in writing, of the reason(s) which prevent the acceptance of the project. Respondent shall correct and redress all of the matters at issue and submit, either electronically or by certified mail, a new notification of completion within 15 days of receipt of the Department's notice. If upon review of the new submittal, the Department determines that the in-kind project is still incomplete or not in accordance with the approved proposal, the in-kind penalty project option shall be forfeited and the entire amount of civil penalty shall be due from the Respondent to the Department within 30 days of Department notice. If the in-kind penalty project is terminated and Respondent timely remits the penalty, no additional penalties shall be assessed for failure to complete the requirements of this paragraph.