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HEARINGS CLERK
EPA -- REGION 10

BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

In the Matter of:

AURORA COMMUNICATIONS
INTERNATIONAL, INC.,

Respondent.

DOCKET NO. CWA-10-2015-0027

CONSENT AGREEMENT AND
FINAL ORDER

I. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

1.1. This Consent Agreement and Final Order (“CAFO”) is issued under the authority vested in the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) by Section 309(g)(2)(B) of the Clean Water Act (“CWA”), 33 U.S.C. § 1319(g)(2)(B).

1.2. The Administrator has delegated the authority to issue the Final Order contained in Part V of this CAFO to the Regional Administrator of EPA Region 10, who has redelegated this authority to the Regional Judicial Officer in EPA Region 10.

1.3. Pursuant to Section 309(g)(1) and (2)(B) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1319(g)(1) and (2)(B), and in accordance with the “Consolidated Rules of Practice Governing the Administrative Assessment of Civil Penalties,” 40 C.F.R. Part 22, EPA issues, and Aurora Communications International, Inc. (“Respondent”) agrees to issuance of, the Final Order contained in Part V of this CAFO.

II. PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

2.1. In accordance with 40 C.F.R. §§ 22.13(b) and 22.18(b), issuance of this CAFO commences this proceeding, which will conclude when the Final Order contained in Part V of this CAFO becomes effective.

2.2. The Administrator has delegated the authority to sign consent agreements between EPA and the party against whom a Class II penalty is proposed to be assessed pursuant to Section 309(g) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1319(g), to the Regional Administrator of EPA Region 10, who has redelegated this authority to the Director of the Office of Ecosystems, Tribal and Public Affairs, EPA Region 10 (“Complainant”).

2.3. Part III of this CAFO contains a concise statement of the factual and legal basis for the alleged violations of the CWA together with the specific provisions of the CWA and the implementing regulations that Respondent is alleged to have violated.

III. ALLEGATIONS

3.1. Section 301(a) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1311(a), prohibits the discharge of pollutants into waters of the United States by any person, except as authorized by a permit issued pursuant to Section 402 or 404 of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1342 or 1344. Each discharge of pollutants from a point source that is not authorized by such a permit constitutes a violation of Section 301(a) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1311(a).

3.2. Respondent is a corporation duly organized under the laws of the State of California and is therefore a “person” within the meaning of Sections 301(a) and 502(5) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1311(a) and 1362(5).

3.3. Respondent owns, possesses, and/or controls approximately 150 acres of real property north of Ninilchik, Alaska. This property is located at Lots 1, 2 and SW Quarter, NE Quarter, Section 7, Township 1 South, Range 13 West, Seward Meridian, Ninilchik, Alaska. Respondent’s Ninilchik property is hereinafter referred to as the “Site.”

3.4. At the time of the unauthorized activities described below, the Site contained at least 60 acres of wetlands within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(t) and 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(b). These wetlands meet the criteria for jurisdictional wetlands in the 1987 “Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands.”

3.5. The Site’s wetland areas are adjacent and hydrologically connected to unnamed creeks or ravines, which are themselves tributaries of Cook Inlet. Cook Inlet is subject to the ebb and flow of the tide and is a “navigable water” within the meaning of Section 502(7) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1362(7), and a “water of the United States” within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s) and 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a). Consequently the Site’s wetlands, the unnamed creeks/ravines, and the intertidal portions of the Site are “navigable waters” within the meaning of Section 502(7) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1362(7), and “waters of the United States” within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s) and 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a).

3.6. From March 2012, to July 2012, at times more fully known to Respondent, Respondent and/or persons acting on its behalf, operated earthmoving equipment and other construction equipment to place dredged and/or fill material into approximately 0.55 acres of wetlands and other waters of the United States at the Site. This activity occurred when Respondent was, *inter alia*, constructing a gravel access road and a foundation pad for installation of a shortwave radio antenna tower.

3.7. The earthmoving equipment and other construction equipment referenced in Paragraph 3.6 are “point source[s]” within the meaning of Section 502(14) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1362(14).

3.8. The dredged and/or fill material that Respondent and/or persons acting on its behalf caused to be discharged, as referenced in Paragraph 3.6, including gravel, concrete, soil,

and other materials, each of which constitutes “dredged material” and/or “fill material” within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 232.2, and “pollutant[s]” within the meaning of Section 502(6) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1362(6).

3.9. By causing such dredged and/or fill material to enter waters of the United States, Respondent engaged in the “discharge of pollutants” from a point source within the meaning of Sections 301(a) and 502(12) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1311(a) and 1362(12).

3.10. Respondent’s discharges of dredged and/or fill materials described in Paragraph 3.6 were not authorized by any permit issued pursuant to Section 404 of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1344. Respondent is therefore in violations of Section 301(a) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1311(a).

3.11. Each day the dredged and/or fill material remains in place without the required permit constitutes an additional day of violation of Section 301(a) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1311(a).

3.12. In accordance with Section 309(g)(2)(B) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1319(g)(2)(B), and 40 C.F.R. Part 19, Respondent is liable for the administrative assessment of civil penalties for violations at the Site in an amount not to exceed \$16,000 per day for each day during which the violation continues, up to a maximum of \$177,500.

IV. CONSENT AGREEMENT

- 4.1. Respondent admits the jurisdictional allegations of this CAFO.
- 4.2. Respondent neither admits nor denies the specific factual allegations contained in this CAFO.
- 4.3. As required by Section 309(g)(3) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1319(g)(3), EPA has taken into account the nature, circumstances, extent, and gravity of the alleged violations as well

as Respondent's degree of culpability, economic benefit of noncompliance, ability to pay, and other relevant factors. After considering all of these factors, EPA has determined and Respondent agrees that an appropriate penalty to settle this action is \$30,000.

4.4. Respondent agrees to pay the total civil penalty set forth in Paragraph 4.3 within 30 days of the effective date of the Final Order contained in Part V of this CAFO.

4.5. Payment under this CAFO must be made by a cashier's check or certified check payable to the order of "Treasurer, United States of America" and delivered to the following address:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Fines and Penalties
Cincinnati Finance Center
P.O. Box 979077
St. Louis, MO 63197-9000

Respondent must note on the check the title and docket number of this action.

4.6. Respondent must serve photocopies of the check described in Paragraph 4.5 on the Regional Hearing Clerk and EPA Region 10 at the following addresses:

Regional Hearing Clerk
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 10, Mail Stop ORC-158
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101

Mark Jen
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
Region 10, Alaska Operations Office
Federal Building Room 537
222 West 7th Avenue #19
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

4.7. If Respondent fails to pay the penalty assessed by this CAFO in full by its due date, the entire unpaid balance of penalty and accrued interest shall become immediately due and owing. Such failure may also subject Respondent to a civil action to collect the assessed penalty under the CWA, together with interest, fees, costs, and additional penalties described below. In any collection action, the validity, amount, and appropriateness of the penalty shall not be subject to review.

4.7.1. Interest. Pursuant to Section 309(g)(9) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1319(g)(9), any unpaid portion of the assessed penalty shall bear interest at a rate established by the Secretary of Treasury pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 3717(a)(1) from the effective date of the Final Order set forth in Part V, provided however, that no interest shall be payable on any portion of the assessed penalty that is paid within 30 days of the effective date of the Final Order.

4.7.2. Attorneys Fees, Collection Costs, Nonpayment Penalty. Pursuant to Section 309(g)(9) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1319(g)(9), if Respondent fails to pay on a timely basis the penalty set forth in Paragraph 4.3, Respondent shall pay (in addition to any assessed penalty and interest) attorneys fees and costs for collection proceedings and a quarterly nonpayment penalty for each quarter during which such failure to pay persists. Such nonpayment penalty shall be in an amount equal to 20% of the aggregate amount of Respondent's penalties and nonpayment penalties which are unpaid as of the beginning of such quarter.

4.8. The penalty described in Paragraph 4.3, including any additional costs incurred under Paragraph 4.7, above, represents an administrative civil penalty assessed by EPA and shall not be deductible for purposes of federal taxes.

4.9. Except as described in Subparagraph 4.7.2, above, each party shall bear its own costs in bringing or defending this action.

4.10. Respondent expressly waives any right to contest the allegations and waives any right to appeal the Final Order set forth in Part V.

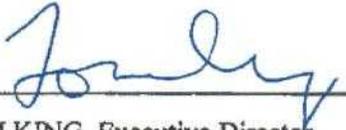
4.11. The provisions of this CAFO shall bind Respondent and its agents, servants, employees, successors, and assigns.

4.12. The above provisions are STIPULATED AND AGREED upon by Respondent and EPA Region 10.

DATED:

12 FEBRUARY 2015

FOR RESPONDENT:



TOM KING, Executive Director
Aurora Communications International, Inc.

DATED:

13 February 2015

FOR COMPLAINANT:



R. DAVID ALLNUTT, Director
Office of Ecosystems, Tribal and Public Affairs
EPA Region 10

V. FINAL ORDER

5.1. The terms of the foregoing Parts I-IV are ratified and incorporated by reference into this Final Order. Respondent is ordered to comply with the terms of settlement.

5.2. This CAFO constitutes a settlement by EPA of all claims for civil penalties pursuant to the CWA for the violations alleged in Part III. In accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 22.31(a), nothing in this CAFO shall affect the right of EPA or the United States to pursue appropriate injunctive or other equitable relief or criminal sanctions for any violations of law. This CAFO does not waive, extinguish, or otherwise affect Respondent's obligations to comply with all applicable provisions of the CWA and regulations promulgated or permits issued thereunder.

5.3. In accordance with Section 309(g)(1) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1319(g)(1), and

40 C.F.R. § 22.38(b), the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation has been given the opportunity to consult with EPA regarding the assessment of the administrative civil penalty against Respondent.

5.4. Pursuant to Section 309(g)(4)(A) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. § 1319(g)(4)(A), and 40 C.F.R. § 22.45(b), EPA has issued public notice of and provided reasonable opportunity to comment on its intent to assess an administrative penalty against Respondent. More than 40 days have elapsed since issuance of this public notice and EPA has received no petition to set aside the Consent Agreement contained herein.

5.5. This Final Order shall become effective upon filing.

SO ORDERED this 31st day of March, 2015.


M. SOCORRO RODRIGUEZ
Regional Judicial Officer
EPA Region 10

Certificate of Service

The undersigned certifies that the original of the attached **CONSENT AGREEMENT AND FINAL ORDER**, in **In the Matter of: Aurora Communications International Inc., Docket No.: CWA-10-2015-0027** was served on the addressees in the following manner on the date specified below:

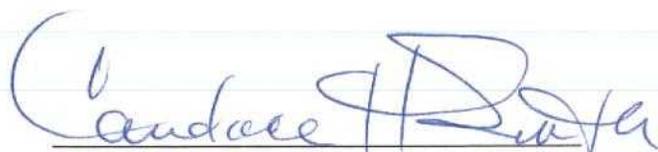
The undersigned certifies that a true and correct copy of the document was delivered to:

Endre Mark Szalay, Esq.
Office of Regional Counsel
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 10, Mail Stop ORC-158
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, Washington 98101

Further, the undersigned certifies that a true and correct copy of the aforementioned document was placed in the United States mail certified/return receipt to:

Mr. Tom King
Executive Director
Aurora Communications International Inc.
P.O. Box 1300
Belmont, California 94002

DATED this 1st day of April, 2015


Signature

Candace H. Smith
Regional Hearing Clerk
EPA Region 10

