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CRC-17-21

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Coastal Resources Commission
FROM: Roy Brownlow, DCM Compliance Coordinator
SUBJECT: 15A NCAC 07J .0409 Civil Penalties - Rule Changes and Updates

As with any regulatory program, rules and relevant statutes describe DCM's jurisdiction for permitting and enforcement activities. Updating the rules on a regular basis is necessary to ensure consistency with changes made to relevant statutes and to improve the enforcement process.

Division of Coastal Management (DCM) staff recently reviewed 15A NCAC 07J .0409 Civil Penalties and have identified the following areas for updating:

- 07J .0409(e) states that **Notices of Violation** issued by the Division "...shall be delivered personally or by registered mail, return receipt requested."
- **Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends changing this language to include the only two methods allowed for delivering Notices of Violation (which is an early step in the Notice of Assessment process) under NCGS §113A-126, which are registered or certified mail, return receipt requested.
Proposed: ...shall be delivered personally, by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested.
- 07J .0409(f)(2) states that "The Director shall issue a notice of assessment [NOA] within 30 days after the Division determines that restoration of the adversely impacted resources is complete." This rule can conflict with NCGS §143B 279.16 (Effective July 1, 2011), which mandates ten (10) days be added between the time the violator is sent a Notice of Violation (NOV) of an environmental statute or an environmental rule and the subsequent date the violator is sent a NOA for the civil penalty.

The stated intent of NCGS §143B 279.16 is to provide extra time for a violator and the state to work together to resolve the violation, while the Commission's current rule mandates a quick time period between restoration and the NOA. Taken together, the recent legislation and CRC rule create a narrow timeline to assemble the necessary paperwork, which can be somewhat problematic for the Division. The Commission's current rule also does not specify what happens to violators who are not required to restore resources (for example, contractors who are not also the property owner). Finally, the Commission's current rule uses the mandatory term "shall," which is inconsistent with the discretionary term "may" in NCGS § 113A-126.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends increasing the period of time before an NOA is sent, adding language to distinguish cases where restoration is required from those where it is not required, and changing "shall" to "may."

Proposed: If restoration of affected resources is not required, the Director shall may issue a notice of assessment within 30 90 days from the date of the Notice of Violation. If restoration of affected resources is required, the Director may issue a notice of assessment within 60 days after the Division determines that restoration of the adversely impacted resources is complete or the due date of restoration completion.

- 07J .0409(f)(3) under **Civil Penalty Assessment:** states that the notice [of civil penalty assessment] "... shall be delivered personally or by registered mail, return receipt requested."

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends changing this language to include the two methods allowed for delivering Notices of Assessment under NCGS §113A-126, which are registered or certified mail, return receipt requested. The use of certified mail is more commonly used today than registered mail.

Proposed: shall be delivered personally, by registered mail, or certified mail, return receipt requested.

- **Schedule A Major Development Violations** (penalty matrix), note (4) lists the "High Hazard Flood Area." The HHFA AEC was repealed in September 2015.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends deleting the words "High Hazard Flood Area" from note (5) as the HHFA is no longer an AEC.

(4) Includes the Ocean Erodible, High Hazard Flood Area, Inlet Hazard Area, and Unvegetated Beach Area.

- **Schedule B Minor Development Violations** (penalty matrix), note (1) lists the "High Hazard Flood Area." The HHFA AEC was repealed in September 2015.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends deleting the words "High Hazard Flood Area" from note (1) as the HHFA is no longer an AEC.

(1) Includes the Ocean Erodible, High Hazard Flood Area, Inlet Hazard Area, and Unvegetated Beach Area.

I look forward to discussing these amendments with the Commission at the upcoming meeting in Greenville.

Attachment A

NC Coastal Area Management Act - NCGS 113A-126(d)

§ 113A-126. Injunctive relief and penalties.

(a) Upon violation of any of the provisions of this Article or of any rule or order adopted under the authority of this Article the Secretary may, either before or after the institution of proceedings for the collection of any penalty imposed by this Article for such violation, institute a civil action in the General Court of Justice in the name of the State upon the relation of the Secretary for injunctive relief to restrain the violation and for a preliminary and permanent mandatory injunction to restore the resources consistent with this Article and rules of the Commission. If the court finds that a violation is threatened or has occurred, the court shall, at a minimum, order the relief necessary to prevent the threatened violation or to abate the violation consistent with this Article and rules of the Commission. Neither the institution of the action nor any of the proceedings thereon shall relieve any party to such proceedings from any penalty prescribed by this Article for any violation of same.

(b) Upon violation of any of the provisions of this Article relating to permits for minor developments issued by a local government, or of any rule or order adopted under the authority of this Article relating to such permits, the designated local official may, either before or after the institution of proceedings for the collection of any penalty imposed by this Article for such violation, institute a civil action in the General Court of Justice in the name of the affected local government upon the relation of the designated local official for injunctive relief to restrain the violation and for a preliminary and permanent mandatory injunction to restore the resources consistent with this Article and rules of the Commission. If the court finds that a violation is threatened or has occurred, the court shall, at a minimum, order the relief necessary to prevent the threatened violation or to abate the violation consistent with this Article and rules of the Commission. Neither the institution of the action nor any of the proceedings thereon shall relieve any party to such proceedings from any penalty prescribed by this Article for any violation of same.

(c) Any person who shall be adjudged to have knowingly or willfully violated any provision of this Article, or any rule or order adopted pursuant to this Article, shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. In addition, if any person continues to violate or further violates, any such provision, rule or order after written notice from the Secretary or (in the case of a permit for a minor development issued by a local government) written notice from the designated local official, the court may determine that each day during which the violation continues or is repeated constitutes a separate violation subject to the foregoing penalties.

(d) (1) A civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for a minor development violation and ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for a major development violation may be assessed by the Commission against any person who:

- a. Is required but fails to apply for or to secure a permit required by G.S. 113A-118, or who violates or fails to act in accordance with the terms, conditions, or requirements of such permit.
- b. Fails to file, submit, or make available, as the case may be, any documents, data or reports required by the Commission pursuant to this Article.
- c. Refuses access to the Commission or its duly designated representative, who has sufficiently identified himself by displaying official credentials, to any premises, not including any occupied dwelling house or curtilage, for the purpose of conducting any investigations provided for in this Article.
- d. Violates a rule of the Commission implementing this Article.

(2) For each willful action or failure to act for which a penalty may be assessed under this subsection, the Commission may consider each day the action or inaction continues after notice is given of the violation as a separate violation; a separate penalty may be assessed for each such separate violation.

(3) The Commission shall notify a person who is assessed a penalty or investigative costs by registered or certified mail. The notice shall state the reasons for the penalty. A person may contest the assessment of a penalty or investigative costs by filing a petition for a contested case under G.S. 150B-23 within 20 days after receiving the notice of assessment. If a person fails to pay any civil penalty or investigative cost assessed under this subsection, the Commission shall refer the matter to the Attorney General for collection. An action to collect a penalty must be filed within three years after the date the final decision was served on the violator.

(4) In determining the amount of the civil penalty, the Commission shall consider the following factors:

- a. The degree and extent of harm, including, but not limited to, harm to the natural resources of the State, to the public health, or to private property resulting from the violation;
 - b. The duration and gravity of the violation;
 - c. The effect on water quality, coastal resources, or public trust uses;
 - d. The cost of rectifying the damage;
 - e. The amount of money saved by noncompliance;
 - f. Whether the violation was committed willfully or intentionally;
 - g. The prior record of the violator in complying or failing to comply with programs over which the Commission has regulatory authority; and
 - h. The cost to the State of the enforcement procedures.
- (4a) The Commission may also assess a person who is assessed a civil penalty under this subsection the reasonable costs of any investigation, inspection, or monitoring that results in the assessment of the civil penalty. For a minor development violation, the amount of an assessment of investigative costs shall not exceed one-half of the amount of the civil penalty assessed or one thousand dollars (\$1,000), whichever is less. For a major development violation, the amount of an assessment of investigative costs shall not exceed one-half of the amount of the civil penalty assessed or two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500), whichever is less.
- (5) The clear proceeds of penalties assessed pursuant to this subsection shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2. (1973, c. 1284, s. 1; 1975, c. 452, s. 5; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; 1981, c. 932, s. 2.1; 1983, c. 485, ss. 1-3; c. 518, s. 6; 1987, c. 827, ss. 11, 143; 1991, c. 725, s. 6; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 839, s. 3; c. 890, s. 8; 1993, c. 539, s. 874; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1998-215, s. 53(a); 2006-229, s. 1; 2011-398, s. 38.)

Civil penalty assessments - NCGS 143B-279.16

§ 143B-279.16. Civil penalty assessments.

(a) The purpose of this section is to provide to the person receiving a notice of violation of an environmental statute or an environmental rule a greater opportunity to understand what corrective action is needed, receive technical assistance from the Department of Environmental Quality, and to take the needed corrective action. It is also the purpose of this section to provide to the person receiving the notice of violation a greater opportunity for informally resolving matters involving any such violation.

(b) In order to fulfill the purpose set forth in subsection (a) of this section, the Department of Environmental Quality shall, effective July 1, 2011, extend the period of time by 10 days between the time the violator is sent a notice of violation of an environmental statute or an environmental rule and the subsequent date the violator is sent an assessment of the civil penalty for the violation. (2011-145, s. 13.6; 2015-241, s. 14.30(u).)

Attachment B
Proposed Rule Amendment

15A NCAC 07J .0409 CIVIL PENALTIES

(a) Purpose and Scope. These Rules provide the procedures and standards governing the assessment, remission, settlement and appeal of civil penalties assessed by the Coastal Resources Commission and the Director pursuant to G.S. 113A-126(d).

(b) Definitions. The terms used herein shall be as defined in G.S. 113A-103 and as follows:

- (1) "Act" means the Coastal Area Management Act of 1974, G.S. 113A-100 through 134, plus amendments.
- (2) "Delegate" means the Director or other employees of the Division of Coastal Management, or local permit officers to whom the Commission has delegated authority to act in its stead pursuant to this Rule.
- (3) "Director" means the Director, Division of Coastal Management.
- (4) "Respondent" means the person to whom a notice of violation has been issued or against whom a penalty has been assessed.
- (5) "Person" is defined in the Coastal Area Management Act, G.S. 113A-103(9).

(c) Civil penalties may be assessed against any person who commits a violation as provided for in G.S. 113A-126(d)(1) and (2).

(d) Investigative costs. Pursuant to G.S. 113A-126(d)(4a) the Commission or Director may also assess a respondent for the costs incurred by the Division for investigation, inspection, and monitoring associated with assessment the civil penalty. Investigative costs shall be in addition to any civil penalty assessed. For a minor development violation, investigative costs shall not exceed one-half of the amount of the civil penalty assessed or one thousand dollars (\$1,000), whichever is less. For a major development violation, investigative costs shall not exceed one-half of the amount of the civil penalty assessed or two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500), whichever is less. The Division shall determine the amount of investigative costs to assess based upon factors including the amount of staff time required for site visits, investigation, enforcement action, interagency coordination, and for monitoring restoration of the site.

(e) Notice of Violation. The Commission hereby authorizes employees of the Division of Coastal Management to issue in the name of the Commission notices of violation to any person engaged in an activity which constitutes a violation for which a civil penalty may be assessed. Such notices shall set forth the nature of the alleged violation, shall order that the illegal activity be ceased and affected resources be restored in accordance with 15A NCAC 07J .0410. The notice shall specify the time by which the restoration shall be completed as ordered by the Division. The notice shall be delivered personally or by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested.

(f) Civil Penalty Assessment.

- (1) The Commission hereby delegates to the Director the authority to assess civil penalties according to the procedures set forth in Paragraph (g) of this Rule.
- (2) If restoration of affected resources is not required, the The Director shall may issue a notice of assessment within 30 90 days from the date of the Notice of Violation. If restoration of affected resources is required, the Director may issue a notice of assessment within 60 days after the Division determines that restoration of the adversely impacted resources is complete, complete or due date of restoration completion.
- (3) The notice of assessment shall specify the reason for assessment, how the assessment was calculated, when and where payment shall be made, and shall inform the respondent of the right to appeal the assessment by filing a petition for a contested case hearing with the Office of Administrative Hearings pursuant to G.S. 150B-23. The notice shall be delivered personally or by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested.

(g) Amount of Assessment.

- (1) Civil penalties shall not exceed the maximum amounts established by G.S. 113A-126(d).
- (2) If any respondent willfully continues to violate by action or inaction any rule or order of the Commission after the date specified in a notice of violation, each day the violation continues or is repeated shall be considered a separate violation as provided in G.S. 113A-126(d)(2).
- (3) In determining the amount of the penalty, the Commission or Director shall consider the factors contained in G.S. 113A-126(d)(4).
- (4) Pursuant to Subparagraph (g)(3) of this Rule, penalties for major development violations, including violations of permit conditions, shall be assessed in accordance with the following criteria.
 - (A) Major development which could have been permitted under the Commission's rules at the time the notice of violation is issued shall be assessed a penalty equal to two times the relevant CAMA permit application fee, plus investigative costs.

(B) Major development which could not have been permitted under the Commission's rules at the time the notice of violation is issued shall be assessed an amount equal to the relevant CAMA permit application fee, plus a penalty pursuant to Schedule A of this Rule, plus investigative costs. If a violation affects more than one area of environmental concern (AEC) or coastal resource as listed within Schedule A of this Rule, the penalties for each affected AEC shall be combined. Any structure or part of a structure that is constructed in violation of existing Commission rules shall be removed or modified as necessary to bring the structure into compliance with the Commission's rules.

SCHEDULE A
Major Development Violations

AREA OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AFFECTED	Size of Violation (sq. ft.)										
	≤ 100	101-500	501-1,000	1001-3000	3001-5000	5001-8000	8001-11,000	11,001-15,000	15,001-20,000	20,001-25,000	>25,000
ESTUARINE WATERS OR PUBLIC TRUST AREAS (1)	\$250	\$375	\$500	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$3,500	\$5,000	\$7,000	\$9,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Primary Nursery Areas	\$100	\$225	\$350	\$850	\$1,350	\$2,850	\$4,350	\$3,000	\$1,000	n/a	n/a
Mudflats and Shell Bottom	\$100	\$225	\$350	\$850	\$1,350	\$2,850	\$4,350	\$3,000	\$1,000	n/a	n/a
Submerged Aquatic Vegetation	\$100	\$225	\$350	\$850	\$1,350	\$2,850	\$4,350	\$3,000	\$1,000	n/a	n/a
COASTAL WETLANDS	\$250	\$375	\$500	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$3,500	\$5,000	\$7,000	\$9,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
COASTAL SHORELINES	\$250	\$350	\$450	\$850	\$1,250	\$2,450	\$3,650	\$5,250	\$7,250	\$9,250	\$10,000
Wetlands (2)	\$100	\$200	\$300	\$700	\$1,100	\$2,300	\$3,500	\$4,750	\$2,750	\$750	n/a
ORW- Adjacent Areas	\$100	\$200	\$300	\$700	\$1,100	\$2,300	\$3,500	\$4,750	\$2,750	\$750	n/a
OCEAN HAZARD SYSTEM (3)(4)	\$250	\$350	\$450	\$850	\$1,250	\$2,450	\$3,650	\$5,250	\$7,250	\$9,250	\$10,000
Primary or Frontal Dune	\$100	\$200	\$300	\$700	\$1,100	\$2,300	\$3,500	\$4,750	\$2,750	\$750	n/a
PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES (5)	\$250	\$350	\$450	\$850	\$1,250	\$2,450	\$3,650	\$5,250	\$7,250	\$9,250	\$10,000
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE AREAS (6)	\$250	\$350	\$450	\$850	\$1,250	\$2,450	\$3,650	\$5,250	\$7,250	\$9,250	\$10,000

- (1) Includes the Atlantic Ocean from the normal high water mark to three miles offshore.
- (2) Wetlands that are jurisdictional by the Federal Clean Water Act.
- (3) If the AEC physically overlaps another AEC, use the greater penalty schedule.
- (4) Includes the Ocean Erodible, **High Hazard Flood Area**, Inlet Hazard Area, and Unvegetated Beach Area.
- (5) Includes Small Surface Water Supply, Watershed and Public Water Supply Well Fields.
- (6) Includes Coastal Complex Natural Areas, Coastal Areas Sustaining Remnant Species, Unique Geological Formations, Significant Coastal Archaeological Resources, and Significant Coastal Historical Architectural Resources.

SCHEDULE B

Minor Development Violations

AREA OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AFFECTED	Size of Violation (sq. ft.)										
	≤ 100	101-500	501-1,000	1001-3000	3001-5000	5001-8000	8001-11,000	11,001-15,000	15,001-20,000	20,001-25,000	>25,000
COASTAL SHORELINES	\$225	\$250	\$275	\$325	\$375	\$450	\$525	\$625	\$750	\$875	\$1,000
ORW- Adjacent Areas	\$125	\$150	\$175	\$225	\$275	\$350	\$425	\$375	\$250	\$125	n/a
OCEAN HAZARD SYSTEM (1)(2)											
Primary or Frontal Dune	\$125	\$150	\$175	\$225	\$275	\$350	\$425	\$375	\$250	\$125	n/a
PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES (3)											
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE AREAS (4)	\$225	\$250	\$275	\$325	\$375	\$450	\$525	\$625	\$750	\$875	\$1,000

- (1) Includes the Ocean Erodible, **High Hazard Flood Area**, Inlet Hazard Area, and Unvegetated Beach Area.
- (2) If the AEC physically overlaps another AEC, use the greater penalty schedule.
- (3) Includes Small Surface Water Supply, Watershed and Public Water Supply Well Fields.
- (4) Includes Coastal Complex Natural Areas, Coastal Areas Sustaining Remnant Species, Unique Geological Formations, Significant Coastal Archaeological Resources, and Significant Coastal Historical Architectural Resources.
- (C) Violations by public agencies (e.g. towns, counties and state agencies) shall be handled by the local permit officer or one of the Commission's delegates within their respective jurisdictions except that in no case shall a local permit officer handle a violation committed by the local government they represent. Penalties shall be assessed in accordance with Parts (g)(5)(A) and (B) of this Rule.