



**BRIAN E. FROSH, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL**

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Wastewater Treatment Company and Business Owner Sentenced in Separate Environmental Crimes in Cecil County**

**BALTIMORE, MD (May 10, 2022)** – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today announced the successful prosecution of two unrelated environmental crimes in Cecil County by the office’s Environmental Crimes Unit (ECU).

CECO Utilities, Inc. pleaded guilty in the Circuit Court for Cecil County to four counts of discharging a pollutant to waters of the State of Maryland. The Honorable Judge Keith A. Baynes ordered CECO Utilities, Inc. to pay a fine of \$100,000, suspending all but \$30,000 to be paid to the Maryland Clean Water Fund, and three years of probation.

CECO Utilities operated a privately held wastewater treatment plant on Johnstown Road in Elkton, Maryland, providing services to approximately 150 local households in the Manchester Park community. Originally constructed in the 1970’s, the plant treats sewage using a lagoon system, where the waste is held in large ponds, treated with chlorine and ultimately discharged into Dogwood Run, a tributary of the Elk River. The plant’s wastewater discharge permit expired in 2014 and the plant continued operation without a permit pursuant to a 2013 consent agreement with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). Conditions at the lagoon system deteriorated due to neglect, disinvestment, and despite repeated violation notices by MDE, the company failed to correct the problems and repair equipment. That failure resulted in a series of incidents in 2017 through 2019, when untreated or partially treated sewage overflowed the lagoons directly into Dogwood Run and/or down the plant’s access road into neighboring properties.



This prosecution follows ECU’s [2020 prosecution](#) of the plant’s operator for falsifying water samples submitted to MDE. The plant was unable to properly treat the sewage due to broken

equipment, the historic failure to dredge the lagoons, and the general disrepair of the plant. The operator of the plant then falsified the water samples required under the Consent Order and Original permit to mask the actual levels of *E. Coli* discharging into Dogwood Run. The plant was bypassed in 2020 and the area was connected to the Cherry Hill Wastewater Treatment Plant sewer system.

In late April, the Environmental Crimes Unit also successfully prosecuted an unrelated case in Cecil County Circuit Court. Walter Arevalo Rivera, 47, of Elkton, pleaded guilty to operating an unpermitted refuse disposal system in the 400 block of W. Pulaski Highway in Elkton. The Honorable Judge William W. Davis sentenced Rivera to a one-year suspended sentence, 5 years of probation, and ordered a fine of \$15,000, suspending all but \$2,500 to be paid to the Maryland Clean Water Fund.

Rivera operated a used tire business at the location in 2018 and 2019. The business did not have the required permitting and far exceeded any permissible levels of scrap tire accumulation. An MDE inspection from 2019 estimated as many as 20,000 scrap tires on the property. The property was ultimately remediated by the property owner after civil litigation by MDE.

In making today's announcement, Attorney General Frosh thanked Environmental Crimes Chief Investigator Thomas Waugh and Assistant Attorney General Kory H. Lemmert, for their hard work on both cases, and the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police for their assistance and support.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2022/051022.pdf>