Title 33 —Navigation and Navigable Waters
Chapter II —Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army, Department of Defense

PART 326—ENFORCEMENT

Authority: 33 U.S.C. 401 *et seq.;* 33 U.S.C. 1344; 33 U.S.C. 1413; 33 U.S.C. 2104; 33 U.S.C. 1319; 28 U.S.C. 2461 note.

Source: 51 FR 41246, Nov. 13, 1986, unless otherwise noted.

§ 326.1 Purpose.

This part prescribes enforcement policies (§ 326.2) and procedures applicable to activities performed without required Department of the Army permits (§ 326.3) and to activities not in compliance with the terms and conditions of issued Department of the Army permits (§ 326.4). Procedures for initiating legal actions are prescribed in § 326.5. Nothing contained in this part shall establish a non-discretionary duty on the part of district engineers nor shall deviation from these procedures give rise to a private right of action against a district engineer.

§ 326.2 Policy.

Enforcement, as part of the overall regulatory program of the Corps, is based on a policy of regulating the waters of the United States by discouraging activities that have not been properly authorized and by requiring corrective measures, where appropriate, to ensure those waters are not misused and to maintain the integrity of the program. There are several methods discussed in the remainder of this part which can be used either singly or in combination to implement this policy, while making the most effective use of the enforcement resources available. As EPA has independent enforcement authority under the Clean Water Act for unauthorized discharges, the district engineer should normally coordinate with EPA to determine the most effective and efficient manner by which resolution of a section 404 violation can be achieved.

§ 326.3 Unauthorized activities.

(a) ***Surveillance.*** To detect unauthorized activities requiring permits, district engineers should make the best use of all available resources. Corps employees; members of the public; and representatives of state, local, and other Federal agencies should be encouraged to report suspected violations. Additionally, district engineers should consider developing joint surveillance procedures with Federal, state, or local agencies having similar regulatory responsibilities, special expertise, or interest.

(b) ***Initial investigation.*** District engineers should take steps to investigate suspected violations in a timely manner. The scheduling of investigations will reflect the nature and location of the suspected violations, the anticipated impacts, and the most effective use of inspection resources available to the district engineer. These investigations should confirm whether a violation exists, and if so, will identify the extent of the violation and the parties responsible.

(c) ***Formal notifications to parties responsible for violations.*** Once the district engineer has determined that a violation exists, he should take appropriate steps to notify the responsible parties.

(1) If the violation involves a project that is not complete, the district engineer's notification should be in the form of a cease and desist order prohibiting any further work pending resolution of the violation in accordance with the procedures contained in this part. See paragraph (c)(4) of this section for exception to this procedure.

(2) If the violation involves a completed project, a cease and desist order should not be necessary. However, the district engineer should still notify the responsible parties of the violation.

(3) All notifications, pursuant to paragraphs (c) (1) and (2) of this section, should identify the relevant statutory authorities, indicate potential enforcement consequences, and direct the responsible parties to submit any additional information that the district engineer may need at that time to determine what course of action he should pursue in resolving the violation; further information may be requested, as needed, in the future.

(4) In situations which would, if a violation were not involved, qualify for emergency procedures pursuant to 33 CFR part 325.2(e)(4), the district engineer may decide it would not be appropriate to direct that the unauthorized work be stopped. Therefore, in such situations, the district engineer may, at his discretion, allow the work to continue, subject to appropriate limitations and conditions as he may prescribe, while the violation is being resolved in accordance with the procedures contained in this part.

(5) When an unauthorized activity requiring a permit has been undertaken by American Indians (including Alaskan natives, Eskimos, and Aleuts, but not including Native Hawaiians) on reservation lands or in pursuit of specific treaty rights, the district engineer should use appropriate means to coordinate proposed directives and orders with the Assistant Chief Counsel for Indian Affairs (DAEN-CCI).

(6) When an unauthorized activity requiring a permit has been undertaken by an official acting on behalf of a foreign government, the district engineer should use appropriate means to coordinate proposed directives and orders with the Office, Chief of Engineers, ATTN: DAEN-CCK.

(d) ***Initial corrective measures.***

(1) The district engineer should, in appropriate cases, depending upon the nature of the impacts associated with the unauthorized, completed work, solicit the views of the Environmental Protection Agency; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the National Marine Fisheries Service, and other Federal,

state, and local agencies to facilitate his decision on what initial corrective measures are required. If the district engineer determines as a result of his investigation, coordination, and preliminary evaluation that initial corrective measures are required, he should issue an appropriate order to the parties responsible for the violation. In determining what initial corrective measures are required, the district engineer should consider whether serious jeopardy to life, property, or important public resources (see 33 CFR 320.4) may be reasonably anticipated to occur during the period required for the ultimate resolution of the violation. In his order, the district engineer will specify the initial corrective measures required and the time limits for completing this work. In unusual cases where initial corrective measures substantially eliminate all current and future detrimental impacts resulting from the unauthorized work, further enforcement actions should normally be unnecessary. For all other cases, the district engineer's order should normally specify that compliance with the order will not foreclose the Government's options to initiate appropriate legal action or to later require the submission of a permit application.

(2) An order requiring initial corrective measures that resolve the violation may also be issued by the district engineer in situations where the acceptance or processing of an after-the-fact permit application is prohibited or considered not appropriate pursuant to § 326.3(e)(1) (iii) through (iv) below. However, such orders will be issued only when the district engineer has reached an independent determination that such measures are necessary and appropriate.

(3) It will not be necessary to issue a Corps permit in connection with initial corrective measures undertaken at the direction of the district engineer.

(e) ***After-the-fact permit applications.***

(1) Following the completion of any required initial corrective measures, the district engineer will accept an after-the-fact permit application unless he determines that one of the exceptions listed in subparagraphs i-iv below is applicable. Applications for after-the-fact permits will be processed in accordance with the applicable procedures in 33 CFR parts 320 through 325. Situations where no permit application will be processed or where the acceptance of a permit application must be deferred are as follows:

(i) No permit application will be processed when restoration of the waters of the United States has been completed that eliminates current and future detrimental impacts to the satisfaction of the district engineer.

(ii) No permit application will be accepted in connection with a violation where the district engineer determines that legal action is appropriate (§ 326.5(a)) until such legal action has been completed.

(iii) No permit application will be accepted where a Federal, state, or local authorization or certification, required by Federal law, has already been denied.

(iv) No permit application will be accepted nor will the processing of an application be continued when the district engineer is aware of enforcement litigation that has been initiated by other Federal, state, or local regulatory agencies, unless he determines that concurrent processing of an after-the-fact permit application is clearly appropriate.

(v) No appeal of an approved jurisdictional determination (JD) associated with an unauthorized activity or after-the-fact permit application will be accepted unless and until the applicant has furnished a signed statute of limitations tolling agreement to the district engineer. A separate statute of limitations tolling agreement will be prepared for each unauthorized activity. Any

person who appeals an approved JD associated with an unauthorized activity or applies for an after-the-fact permit, where the application is accepted and evaluated by the Corps, thereby agrees that the statute of limitations regarding any violation associated with that application is suspended until one year after the final Corps decision, as defined at 33 CFR 331.10. Moreover, the recipient of an approved JD associated with an unauthorized activity or an application for an after-the-fact permit must also memorialize that agreement to toll the statute of limitations, by signing an agreement to that effect, in exchange for the Corps acceptance of the after-the-fact permit application, and/or any administrative appeal. Such agreement will state that, in exchange for the Corps acceptance of any after-the-fact permit application and/or any administrative appeal associated with the unauthorized activity, the responsible party agrees that the statute of limitations will be suspended (*i.e.*, tolled) until one year after the final Corps decision on the after-the-fact permit application or, if there is an administrative appeal, one year after the final Corps decision as defined at 33 CFR 331.10, whichever date is later.

(2) Upon completion of his review in accordance with 33 CFR parts 320 through 325, the district engineer will determine if a permit should be issued, with special conditions if appropriate, or denied. In reaching a decision to issue, he must determine that the work involved is not contrary to the public interest, and if section 404 is applicable, that the work also complies with the Environmental Protection Agency's section 404(b)(1) guidelines. If he determines that a denial is warranted, his notification of denial should prescribe any final corrective actions required. His notification should also establish a reasonable period of time for the applicant to complete such actions unless he determines that further information is required before the corrective measures can be specified. If further information is required, the final corrective measures may be specified at a later date. If an applicant refuses to undertake prescribed corrective actions ordered subsequent to permit denial or refuses to accept a conditioned permit, the district engineer may initiate legal action in accordance with § 326.5.

(f) ***Combining steps.*** The procedural steps in this section are in the normal sequence. However, these regulations do not prohibit the streamlining of the enforcement process through the combining of steps.

(g) ***Coordination with EPA.*** In all cases where the district engineer is aware that EPA is considering enforcement action, he should coordinate with EPA to attempt to avoid conflict or duplication. Such coordination applies to interim protective measures and after-the-fact permitting, as well as to appropriate legal enforcement actions.

[51 FR 41246, Nov. 13, 1986, as amended at 64 FR 11714, Mar. 9, 1999; 65 FR 16493, Mar. 28, 2000]

§ 326.4 Supervision of authorized activities.

(a) ***Inspections.*** District engineers will, at their discretion, take reasonable measures to inspect permitted activities, as required, to ensure that these activities comply with specified terms and conditions. To supplement inspections by their enforcement personnel, district engineers should encourage their other personnel; members of the public; and interested state, local, and other Federal agency representatives to report suspected violations of Corps permits. To facilitate inspections, district engineers will, in appropriate cases, require that copies of ENG Form 4336 be posted conspicuously at the sites of authorized activities and will make available to all interested persons information on the terms and conditions of issued permits. The U.S. Coast Guard will inspect permitted ocean dumping activities pursuant to section 107(c) of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, as amended.

(b) ***Inspection limitations.*** Section 326.4 does not establish a non-discretionary duty to inspect permitted activities for safety, sound engineering practices, or interference with other permitted or unpermitted structures or uses in the area. Further, the regulations implementing the Corps regulatory program do not establish a non-discretionary duty to inspect permitted activities for any other purpose.

(c) ***Inspection expenses.*** The expenses incurred in connection with the inspection of permitted activities will normally be paid by the Federal Government unless daily supervision or other unusual expenses are involved. In such unusual cases, the district engineer may condition permits to require permittees to pay inspection expenses pursuant to the authority contained in section 9701 of Pub L. 97-258 (33 U.S.C. 9701). The collection and disposition of inspection expense funds obtained from applicants will be administered in accordance with the relevant Corps regulations governing such funds.

(d) ***Non-compliance.*** If a district engineer determines that a permittee has violated the terms or conditions of the permit and that the violation is sufficiently serious to require an enforcement action, then he should, unless at his discretion he deems it inappropriate:

(1) First contact the permittee;

(2) Request corrected plans reflecting actual work, if needed; and

(3) Attempt to resolve the violation. Resolution of the violation may take the form of the permitted project being voluntarily brought into compliance or of a permit modification (33 CFR 325.7(b)). If a mutually agreeable solution cannot be reached, a written order requiring compliance should normally be issued and delivered by personal service. Issuance of an order is not, however, a prerequisite to legal action. If an order is issued, it will specify a time period of not more than 30 days for bringing the permitted project into compliance, and a copy will be sent to the appropriate state official pursuant to section 404(s)(2) of the Clean Water Act. If the permittee fails to comply with the order within the specified period of time, the district engineer may consider using the suspension/ revocation procedures in 33 CFR 325.7(c) and/or he may recommend legal action in accordance with § 326.5.

§ 326.5 Legal action.

(a) ***General.*** For cases the district engineer determines to be appropriate, he will recommend criminal or civil actions to obtain penalties for violations, compliance with the orders and directives he has issued pursuant to §§ 326.3 and 326.4, or other relief as appropriate. Appropriate cases for criminal or civil action include, but are not limited to, violations which, in the district engineer's opinion, are willful, repeated, flagrant, or of substantial impact.

(b) ***Preparation of case.*** If the district engineer determines that legal action is appropriate, he will prepare a litigation report or such other documentation that he and the local U.S. Attorney have mutually agreed to, which contains an analysis of the information obtained during his investigation of the violation or during the processing of a permit application and a recommendation of appropriate legal action. The litigation report or alternative documentation will also recommend what, if any, restoration or mitigative measures are required and will provide the rationale for any such recommendation.

(c) ***Referral to the local U.S. Attorney.*** Except as provided in paragraph (d) of this section, district engineers are authorized to refer cases directly to the U.S. Attorney. Because of the unique legal system in the Trust Territories, all cases over which the Department of Justice has no authority will be referred to the Attorney General for the trust Territories. Information copies of all letters of referral shall be forwarded to the

appropriate division counsel, the Office, Chief of Engineers, ATTN: DAEN-CCK, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), and the Chief of the Environmental Defense Section, Lands and Natural Resources Division, U.S. Department of Justice.

(d) ***Referral to the Office, Chief of Engineers.*** District engineers will forward litigation reports with recommendations through division offices to the Office, Chief of Engineers, ATTN: DAEN-CCK, for all cases that qualify under the following criteria:

(1) Significant precedential or controversial questions of law or fact;

(2) Requests for elevation to the Washington level by the Department of Justice;

(3) Violations of section 9 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899;

(4) Violations of section 103 the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972;

(5) All cases involving violations by American Indians (original of litigation report to DAEN-CCI with copy to DAEN-CCK) on reservation lands or in pursuit of specific treaty rights;

(6) All cases involving violations by officials acting on behalf of foreign governments; and

(7) Cases requiring action pursuant to paragraph (e) of this section.

(e) ***Legal option not available.*** In cases where the local U.S. Attorney declines to take legal action, it would be appropriate for the district engineer to close the enforcement case record unless he believes that the case warrants special attention. In that situation, he is encouraged to forward a litigation report to the Office, Chief of Engineers, ATTN: DAEN-CCK, for direct coordination through the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) with the Department of Justice. Further, the case record should not be closed if the district engineer anticipates that further administrative enforcement actions, taken in accordance with the procedures prescribed in this part, will identify remedial measures which, if not complied with by the parties responsible for the violation, will result in appropriate legal action at a later date.

§ 326.6 Class I administrative penalties.

(a) ***Introduction.***

(1) This section sets forth procedures for initiation and administration of Class I administrative penalty orders under Section 309(g) of the Clean Water Act, judicially-imposed civil penalties under Section 404(s) of the Clean Water Act, and Section 205 of the National Fishing Enhancement Act. Under Section 309(g)(2)(A) of the Clean Water Act, Class I civil penalties may not exceed $26,686 per violation, except that the maximum amount of any Class I civil penalty shall not exceed $66,713. Under Section 404(s)(4) of the Clean Water Act, judicially-imposed civil penalties may not exceed

$66,713 per day for each violation. Under Section 205(e) of the National Fishing Enhancement Act, penalties for violations of permits issued in accordance with that Act shall not exceed $29,211 for each violation.

TABLE 1 TO PARAGRAPH (a)(1)

Environmental statute and U.S. code citation	Statutory civil monetary penalty amount for violations that occurred after November 2, 2015, and are assessed on or after June 4, 2024
Clean Water Act (CWA), Section 309(g)(2)(A), 33 U.S.C. 1319(g)(2)(A)	$26,686 per violation, with a maximum of $66,713.
CWA, Section 404(s)(4), 33 U.S.C. 1344(s)(4)	Maximum of $66,713 per day for each violation.
National Fishing Enhancement Act, Section 205(e), 33 U.S.C. 2104(e)	Maximum of $29,221 per violation.

(2) These procedures supplement the existing enforcement procedures at §§ 326.1 through 326.5. However, as a matter of Corps enforcement discretion once the Corps decides to proceed with an administrative penalty under these procedures it shall not subsequently pursue judicial action pursuant to § 326.5. Therefore, an administrative penalty should not be pursued if a subsequent judicial action for civil penalties is desired. An administrative civil penalty may be pursued in conjunction with a compliance order; request for restoration and/or request for mitigation issued under § 326.4.

(3) ***Definitions.*** For the purposes of this section of the regulation:

(i) ***Corps*** means the Secretary of the Army, acting through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with respect to the matters covered by this regulation.

(ii) ***Interested person outside the Corps*** includes the permittee, any person who filed written comments on the proposed penalty order, and any other person not employed by the Corps with an interest in the subject of proposed penalty order, and any attorney of record for those persons.

(iii) ***Interested Corps staff*** means those Corps employees, whether temporary or permanent, who may investigate, litigate, or present evidence, arguments, or the position of the Corps in the hearing or who participated in the preparation, investigation or deliberations concerning the proposed penalty order, including any employee, contractor, or consultant who may be called as a witness.

(iv) ***Permittee*** means the person to whom the Corps issued a permit under section 404 of the Clean Water Act, (or section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act for an Artificial Reef) the conditions and limitations of which permit have allegedly been violated.

(v) ***Presiding Officer*** means a member of Corps Counsel staff or any other qualified person designated by the District Engineer (DE), to hold a hearing on a proposed administrative civil penalty order (hereinafter referred to as "proposed order") in accordance with the rules set forth in this regulation and to make such recommendations to the DE as prescribed in this regulation.

(vi) ***Ex parte communication*** means any communication, written or oral, relating to the merits of the proceeding, between the Presiding Officer and an interested person outside the Corps or the interested Corps staff, which was not originally filed or stated in the administrative record or in the hearing. Such communication is not an "ex parte communication" if all parties have received prior written notice of the proposed communication and have been given the opportunity to participate herein.

(b) ***Initiation of action.***

(1) If the DE or a delegatee of the DE finds that a recipient of a Department of the Army permit (hereinafter referred to as "the permittee") has violated any permit condition or limitation contained in that permit, the DE is authorized to prepare and process a proposed order in accordance with these procedures. The proposed order shall specify the amount of the penalty which the permittee may be assessed and shall describe with reasonable specificity the nature of the violation.

(2) The permittee will be provided actual notice, in writing, of the DE's proposal to issue an administrative civil penalty and will be advised of the right to request a hearing and to present evidence on the alleged violation. Notice to the permittee will be provided by certified mail, return receipt requested, or other notice, at the discretion of the DE when he determines justice so requires. This notice will be accompanied by a copy of the proposed order, and will include the following information:

(i) A description of the alleged violation and copies of the applicable law and regulations;

(ii) An explanation of the authority to initiate the proceeding;

(iii) An explanation, in general terms, of the procedure for assessing civil penalties, including opportunities for public participation;

(iv) A statement of the amount of the penalty that is proposed and a statement of the maximum amount of the penalty which the DE is authorized to assess for the violations alleged;

(v) A statement that the permittee may within 30 calendar days of receipt of the notice provided under this subparagraph, request a hearing prior to issuance of any final order. Further, that the permittee must request a hearing within 30 calendar days of receipt of the notice provided under this subparagraph in order to be entitled to receive such a hearing;

(vi) The name and address of the person to whom the permittee must send a request for hearing;

(vii) Notification that the DE may issue the final order on or after 30 calendar days following receipt of the notice provided under these rules, if the permittee does not request a hearing; and

(viii) An explanation that any final order issued under this section shall become effective 30 calendar days following its issuance unless a petition to set aside the order and to hold a hearing is filed by a person who commented on the proposed order and such petition is granted or an appeal is taken under section 309(g)(8) of the Clean Water Act.

(3) At the same time that actual notice is provided to the permittee, the DE shall give public notice of the proposed order, and provide reasonable opportunity for public comment on the proposed order, prior to issuing a final order assessing an administrative civil penalty. Procedures for giving public notice and providing the opportunity for public comment are contained in § 326.6(c).

(4) At the same time that actual notice is provided to the permittee, the DE shall provide actual notice, in writing, to the appropriate state agency for the state in which the violation occurred. Procedures for providing actual notice to and consulting with the appropriate state agency are contained in § 326.6(d).

(c) ***Public notice and comment.***

(1) At the same time the permittee and the appropriate state agency are provided actual notice, the DE shall provide public notice of and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the DE's proposal to issue an administrative civil penalty against the permittee.

(2) A 30 day public comment period shall be provided. Any person may submit written comments on the proposed administrative penalty order. The DE shall include all written comments in an administrative record relating to the proposed order. Any person who comments on a proposed order shall be given notice of any hearing held on the proposed order. Such persons shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard and to present evidence in such hearings.

(3) If no hearing is requested by the permittee, any person who has submitted comments on the proposed order shall be given notice by the DE of any final order issued, and will be given 30 calendar days in which to petition the DE to set aside the order and to provide a hearing on the penalty. The DE shall set aside the order and provide a hearing in accordance with these rules if the evidence presented by the commenter in support of the commenter's petition for a hearing is material and was not considered when the order was issued. If the DE denies a hearing, the DE shall provide notice to the commenter filing the petition for the hearing, together with the reasons for the denial. Notice of the denial and the reasons for the denial shall be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER by the DE.

(4) The DE shall give public notice by mailing a copy of the information listed in paragraph (c)(5), of this section to:

(i) Any person who requests notice;

(ii) Other persons on a mailing list developed to include some or all of the following sources:

(A) Persons who request in writing to be on the list;

(B) Persons on “area lists” developed from lists of participants in past similar proceedings in that area, including hearings or other actions related to section 404 permit issuance as required by § 325.3(d)(1). The DE may update the mailing list from time to time by requesting written indication of continued interest from those listed. The DE may delete from the list the name of any person who fails to respond to such a request.

(5) All public notices under this subpart shall contain at a minimum the information provided to the permittee as described in § 326.6(b)(2) and:

(i) A statement of the opportunity to submit written comments on the proposed order and the deadline for submission of such comments;

(ii) Any procedures through which the public may comment on or participate in proceedings to reach a final decision on the order;

(iii) The location of the administrative record referenced in § 326.6(e), the times at which the administrative record will be available for public inspection, and a statement that all information submitted by the permittee and persons commenting on the proposed order is available as part of the administrative record, subject to provisions of law restricting the public disclosure of confidential information.

(d) ***State consultation.***

(1) At the same time that the permittee is provided actual notice, the DE shall send the appropriate state agency written notice of proposal to issue an administrative civil penalty order. This notice will include the same information required pursuant to § 326.6(c)(5).

(2) For the purposes of this regulation, the appropriate State agency will be the agency administering the 401 certification program, unless another state agency is agreed to by the District and the respective state through formal/informal agreement with the state.

(3) The appropriate state agency will be provided the same opportunity to comment on the proposed order and participate in any hearing that is provided pursuant to § 326.6(c).

(e) ***Availability of the administrative record.***

(1) At any time after the public notice of a proposed penalty order is given under § 326.6(c), the DE shall make available the administrative record at reasonable times for inspection and copying by any interested person, subject to provisions of law restricting the public disclosure of confidential information. Any person requesting copies of the administrative record or portions of the administrative record may be required by the DE to pay reasonable charges for reproducing the information requested.

(2) The administrative record shall include the following:

(i) Documentation relied on by the DE to support the violations alleged in the proposed penalty order with a summary of violations, if a summary has been prepared;

(ii) Proposed penalty order or assessment notice;

(iii) Public notice of the proposed order with evidence of notice to the permittee and to the public;

(iv) Comments by the permittee and/or the public on the proposed penalty order, including any requests for a hearing;

(v) All orders or notices of the Presiding Officer;

(vi) Subpoenas issued, if any, for the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of relevant papers, books, or documents in connection with any hearings;

(vii) All submittals or responses of any persons or comments to the proceeding, including exhibits, if any;

(viii) A complete and accurate record or transcription of any hearing;

(ix) The recommended decision of the Presiding Officer and final decision and/or order of the Corps issued by the DE; and

(x) Any other appropriate documents related to the administrative proceeding;

(f) ***Counsel.*** A permittee may be represented at all stages of the proceeding by counsel. After receiving notification that a permittee or any other party or commenter is represented by counsel, the Presiding Officer and DE shall direct all further communications to that counsel.

(g) ***Opportunity for hearing.***

(1) The permittee may request a hearing and may provide written comments on the proposed administrative penalty order at any time within 30 calendar days after receipt of the notice set forth in § 326.6(b)(2). The permittee must request the hearing in writing, specifying in summary form the factual and legal issues which are in dispute and the specific factual and legal grounds for the permittee's defense.

(2) The permittee waives the right to a hearing to present evidence on the alleged violation or violations if the permittee does not submit the request for the hearing to the official designated in the notice of the proposed order within 30 calendar days of receipt of the notice. The DE shall determine the date of receipt of notice by permittee's signed and dated return receipt or such other evidence that constitutes proof of actual notice on a certain date.

(3) The DE shall promptly schedule requested hearings and provide reasonable notice of the hearing schedule to all participants, except that no hearing shall be scheduled prior to the end of the thirty day public comment period provided in § 326.6(c)(2). The DE may grant any delays or continuances necessary or desirable to resolve the case fairly.

(4) The hearing shall be held at the district office or a location chosen by the DE, except the permittee may request in writing upon a showing of good cause that the hearing be held at an alternative location. Action on such request is at the discretion of the DE.

(h) ***Hearing.***

(1) Hearings shall afford permittees with an opportunity to present evidence on alleged violations and shall be informal, adjudicatory hearings and shall not be subject to section 554 or 556 of the Administrative Procedure Act. Permittees may present evidence either orally or in written form in accordance with the hearing procedures specified in § 326.6(i).

(2) The DE shall give written notice of any hearing to be held under these rules to any person who commented on the proposed administrative penalty order under § 326.6(c). This notice shall specify a reasonable time prior to the hearing within which the commenter may request an opportunity to be heard and to present oral evidence or to make comments in writing in any such hearing. The notice shall require that any such request specify the facts or issues which the commenter wishes to address. Any commenter who files comments pursuant to § 326.6(c)(2) shall have a right to be heard and to present evidence at the hearing in conformance with these procedures.

(3) The DE shall select a member of the Corps counsel staff or other qualified person to serve as Presiding Officer of the hearing. The Presiding Officer shall exercise no other responsibility, direct or supervisory, for the investigation or prosecution of any case before him. The Presiding Officer shall conduct hearings as specified by these rules and make a recommended decision to the DE.

(4) The Presiding Officer shall consider each case on the basis of the evidence presented, and must have no prior connection with the case. The Presiding Officer is solely responsible for the recommended decision in each case.

(5) *Ex parte communications.*

(i) No interested person outside the Corps or member of the interested Corps staff shall make, or knowingly cause to be made, any ex parte communication on the merits of the proceeding.

(ii) The Presiding Officer shall not make, or knowingly cause to be made, any ex parte communication on the proceeding to any interested person outside the Corps or to any member of the interested Corps staff.

(iii) The DE may replace the Presiding Officer in any proceeding in which it is demonstrated to the DE's satisfaction that the Presiding Officer has engaged in prohibited ex parte communications to the prejudice of any participant.

(iv) Whenever an ex parte communication in violation of this section is received by the Presiding Officer or made known to the Presiding Officer, the Presiding Officer shall immediately notify all participants in the proceeding of the circumstances and substance of the communication and may require the person who made the communication or caused it to be made, or the party whose representative made the communication or caused it to be made, to the extent consistent with justice and the policies of the Clean Water Act, to show cause why that person or party's claim or interest in the proceedings should not be dismissed, denied, disregarded, or otherwise adversely affected on account of such violation.

(v) The prohibitions of this paragraph apply upon designation of the Presiding Officer and terminate on the date of final action or the final order.

(i) *Hearing procedures.*

(1) The Presiding Officer shall conduct a fair and impartial proceeding in which the participants are given a reasonable opportunity to present evidence.

(2) The Presiding Officer may subpoena witnesses and issue subpoenas for documents pursuant to the provisions of the Clean Water Act.

(3) The Presiding Officer shall provide interested parties a reasonable opportunity to be heard and to present evidence. Interested parties include the permittee, any person who filed a request to participate under 33 CFR 326.6(c), and any other person attending the hearing. The Presiding Officer may establish reasonable time limits for oral testimony.

(4) The permittee may not challenge the permit condition or limitation which is the subject matter of the administrative penalty order.

(5) Prior to the commencement of the hearing, the DE shall provide to the Presiding Officer the complete administrative record as of that date. During the hearing, the DE, or an authorized representative of the DE may summarize the basis for the proposed administrative order. Thereafter, the administrative record shall be admitted into evidence and the Presiding Officer shall maintain the administrative record of the proceedings and shall include in that record all documentary evidence, written statements, correspondence, the record of hearing, and any other relevant matter.

(6) The Presiding Officer shall cause a tape recording, written transcript or other permanent, verbatim record of the hearing to be made, which shall be included in the administrative record, and shall, upon written request, be made available, for inspection or copying, to the permittee or any person,

subject to provisions of law restricting the public disclosure of confidential information. Any person making a request may be required to pay reasonable charges for copies of the administrative record or portions thereof.

(7) In receiving evidence, the Presiding Officer is not bound by strict rules of evidence. The Presiding Officer may determine the weight to be accorded the evidence.

(8) The permittee has the right to examine, and to respond to the administrative record. The permittee may offer into evidence, in written form or through oral testimony, a response to the administrative record including, any facts, statements, explanations, documents, testimony, or other exculpatory items which bear on any appropriate issues. The Presiding Officer may question the permittee and require the authentication of any written exhibit or statement. The Presiding Officer may exclude any repetitive or irrelevant matter.

(9) At the close of the permittee's presentation of evidence, the Presiding Officer should allow the introduction of rebuttal evidence. The Presiding Officer may allow the permittee to respond to any such rebuttal evidence submitted and to cross-examine any witness.

(10) The Presiding Officer may take official notice of matters that are not reasonably in dispute and are commonly known in the community or are ascertainable from readily available sources of known accuracy. Prior to taking official notice of a matter, the Presiding Officer shall give the Corps and the permittee an opportunity to show why such notice should not be taken. In any case in which official notice is taken, the Presiding Officer shall place a written statement of the matters as to which such notice was taken in the record, including the basis for such notice and a statement that the Corps or permittee consented to such notice being taken or a summary of the objections of the Corps or the permittee.

(11) After all evidence has been presented, any participant may present argument on any relevant issue, subject to reasonable time limitations set at the discretion of the Presiding Officer.

(12) The hearing record shall remain open for a period of 10 business days from the date of the hearing so that the permittee or any person who has submitted comments on the proposed order may examine and submit responses for the record.

(13) At the close of this 10 business day period, the Presiding Officer may allow the introduction of rebuttal evidence. The Presiding Officer may hold the record open for an additional 10 business days to allow the presentation of such rebuttal evidence.

(j) ***The decision.***

(1) Within a reasonable time following the close of the hearing and receipt of any statements following the hearing and after consultation with the state pursuant to § 326.6(d), the Presiding Officer shall forward a recommended decision accompanied by a written statement of reasons to the DE. The decision shall recommend that the DE withdraw, issue, or modify and issue the proposed order as a final order. The recommended decision shall be based on a preponderance of the evidence in the administrative record. If the Presiding Officer finds that there is not a preponderance of evidence in the record to support the penalty or the amount of the penalty in a proposed order, the Presiding Officer may recommend that the order be withdrawn or modified and then issued on terms that are supported by a preponderance of evidence on the record. The Presiding Officer also shall make the complete administrative record available to the DE for review.

(2) The Presiding Officer's recommended decision to the DE shall become part of the administrative record and shall be made available to the parties to the proceeding at the time the DE's decision is released pursuant to § 326.6(j)(5). The Presiding Officer's recommended decision shall not become part of the administrative record until the DE's final decision is issued, and shall not be made available to the permittee or public prior to that time.

(3) The rules applicable to Presiding Officers under § 326.6(h)(5) regarding ex parte communications are also applicable to the DE and to any person who advises the DE on the decision or the order, except that communications between the DE and the Presiding Officer do not constitute ex parte communications, nor do communications between the DE and his staff prior to issuance of the proposed order.

(4) The DE may request additional information on specified issues from the participants, in whatever form the DE designates, giving all participants a fair opportunity to be heard on such additional matters. The DE shall include this additional information in the administrative record.

(5) Within a reasonable time following receipt of the Presiding Officer's recommended decision, the DE shall withdraw, issue, or modify and issue the proposed order as a final order. The DE's decision shall be based on a preponderance of the evidence in the administrative record, shall consider the penalty factors set out in section 309(g)(3) of the CWA, shall be in writing, shall include a clear and concise statement of reasons for the decision, and shall include any final order assessing a penalty. The DE's decision, once issued, shall constitute final Corps action for purposes of judicial review.

(6) The DE shall issue the final order by sending the order, or written notice of its withdrawal, to the permittee by certified mail. Issuance of the order under this subparagraph constitutes final Corps action for purposes of judicial review.

(7) The DE shall provide written notice of the issuance, modification and issuance, or withdrawal of the proposed order to every person who submitted written comments on the proposed order.

(8) The notice shall include a statement of the right to judicial review and of the procedures and deadlines for obtaining judicial review. The notice shall also note the right of a commenter to petition for a hearing pursuant to 33 CFR 326.6(c)(3) if no hearing was previously held.

(k) ***Effective date of order.***

(1) Any final order issued under this subpart shall become effective 30 calendar days following its issuance unless an appeal is taken pursuant to section 309(g)(8) of the Clean Water Act, or in the case where no hearing was held prior to the final order, and a petition for hearing is filed by a prior commenter.

(2) If a petition for hearing is received within 30 days after the final order is issued, the DE shall:

(i) Review the evidence presented by the petitioner.

(ii) If the evidence is material and was not considered in the issuance of the order, the DE shall immediately set aside the final order and schedule a hearing. In that case, a hearing will be held, a new recommendation will be made by the Presiding Officer to the DE and a new final decision issued by the DE.

(iii) If the DE denies a hearing under this subparagraph, the DE shall provide to the petitioner, and publish in the FEDERAL REGISTER, notice of, and the reasons for, such denial.

(l) ***Judicial review.***

(1) Any permittee against whom a final order assessing a civil penalty under these regulations or any person who provided written comments on a proposed order may obtain judicial review of the final order.

(2) In order to obtain judicial review, the permittee or commenter must file a notice of appeal in the United States District Court for either the District of Columbia, or the district in which the violation was alleged to have occurred, within 30 calendar days after the date of issuance of the final order.

(3) Simultaneously with the filing of the notice of appeal, the permittee or commenter must send a copy of such notice by certified mail to the DE and the Attorney General.

[54 FR 50709, Dec. 8, 1989, as amended at 69 FR 35518, June 25, 2004; 78 FR 5726, Jan. 28, 2013; 82 FR 47628, Oct. 13, 2017; 83 FR 19184, May 2, 2018; 84 FR 18982, May 3, 2019; 85 FR 35005, June 8, 2020; 86 FR 37249, July 15, 2021; 87 FR 62989, Oct. 18, 2022; 88 FR 51236, Aug. 3, 2023; 89 FR 47865, June 4, 2024]