

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



IN THE MATTER OF :

APPLICATION NOS.:

PLAINFIELD RENEWABLE ENERGY, LLC

DIV-200603081 (Diversion)

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200602249 (Solid Waste)

:

200602226 (Air)

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200702055 (Discharge)

March 2, 2009

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200800492 (Discharge)

#### **FINAL DECISION**

Hearing Officer Kenneth M. Collette issued his Proposed Final Decision in this matter on December 22, 2008. In his decision, the hearing officer recommended that the proposed air, solid waste, and water diversion permits be issued to the applicant, Plainfield Renewable Energy, LLC ("PRE"). As to the water discharge permit, he recommended that the applicant be authorized to submit for approval to the Commissioner the plans and specifications of the proposed water treatment system, and that upon approval and construction of the facility according to the approved plans and specifications, the proposed water discharge permit be issued pursuant to General Statutes § 22a-430(b).

This final decision affirms the Proposed Final Decision except as expressly provided herein, and adopts, with additional modifications, the hearing officer's recommendation to issue the draft permits to the applicant. This decision also addresses the exceptions of the staff of the Department of Environmental Protection ("Department" or "DEP") and the Intervening Party, Friends of the Quinebuag River ("FQR"). This decision does not specifically address the comments of non-parties, such as Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, which were filed with the Department following the release of the Proposed Final Decision. Herein lies the problem: unlike FQR, these non-parties did not intervene in this proceeding. The DEP's Rules of Practice allow parties and intervenors to file exceptions to proposed

final decisions. Regs., Conn. State Agencies § 22a-3a-6(y)(3)(A). A review of these comments, however, reveals that these non-parties share many of the same views as FQR.

The evidence in the record shows that PRE's applications comply with the applicable statutory and regulatory criteria governing the diversion, solid waste, air and discharge permits. The evidence also shows that FQR did not meet its burden under General Statutes § 22a-19(a) of proving that if the applications for the various permits were granted that the likely result would be unreasonable pollution, impairment or destruction of the public trust in the air, water or other natural resources.

## I. <u>Exception of Department Staff</u>

On December 24, 2008, Department staff filed one exception to the Proposed Final Decision. Specifically, staff requested that the proposed decision be modified to include the following provision: that the air permit not be issued until the applicant has secured the required NOx offsets and agency approval of same.

On January 5, 2009, the applicant filed a response to staff's exception. The applicant agreed that issuance of the air permit is indeed conditioned upon the certification that the applicant has acquired the necessary NOx emission reduction credits. The applicant disagreed, however, that a modification to the Proposed Final Decision was necessary to ensure clarity.

The applicant is correct; there is no need to modify the Proposed Final Decision given the hearing officer's incorporation of the staff and applicant's Agreed Draft Decision and the accompanying draft air permit. The record clearly demonstrates that the applicant is required to acquire the necessary NOx emission reduction credits prior to final permit issuance.

#### II. Exceptions of the Intervening Party

On January 6, 2009, the Friends of the Quinebaug River filed a number of exceptions to certain findings of fact and conclusions of law contained in the Proposed Final Decision. These exceptions are discussed below.

### A. Exceptions to Findings of Fact

1. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 10</u>: FQR takes exception to the hearing officer's reference to nearby landfills as "closed." FQR argues that the smaller, closed landfills and the Yaworski sites have not been closed according to DEP standards.

Response: It is found that the word "closed" in the Proposed Final Decision is not intended in a legal sense, but in the more general sense that these landfills are no longer accepting materials, as testified to by Mark Lewis and Scott Atkin. Nothing in Finding of Fact No. 10 implies that the Yaworski sites are closed. DEP-DIV-15, test. M. Lewis, 8/28/08, S. Atkin, 8/26/08.

2. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 19</u>: FQR takes exception to the use of the definition of regulated wood fuel alleging that it implies the applicant must remove 100% of the non-wood materials.

Response: The statement made by the hearing officer contains the statutory definition of regulated wood fuel. General Statutes § 22a-209a(a)(4). Other portions of the statute that reference the operations of a regulated wood fuel user are not relevant in this finding and speak for themselves. See General Statutes § 22a-209a(c). It is not intended to imply 100% removal. DEP staff acknowledges in testimony that the law allows regulated wood fuel to contain 1% of non-wood materials. The permit conditions, however, do not permit wood treated with preservatives or pesticides to be used regardless of the statutory provision that would allow regulated wood fuel to contain up to 1% of non-wood materials. The Quality Control protocols are incorporated into the permit to ensure no hazardous materials are accepted as part of the fuel and that construction and demolition wood is free of non-wood materials such as wallboard and shingles. DEP-SW-1; DEP-SW-14; test. C. Tanovici, 8/20/08.

3. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 27</u>: FQR takes exception to the use of the size specifications from the permit application Operations & Management manual and the draft permit. FQR wants the finding to add that 10% of the wood fuel will be dust sized.

Response: There is no evidence of what constitutes "dust-sized." It is clear from the finding as written, the permit, and the application that 10% of the material may be less than ¼ inch. See DEP-SW-1, DEP-SW-14.

### 4. Exceptions to Finding of Fact No. 45:

a. <u>Paras. 1 and 2</u>: FQR takes exception to findings that the air cooling technology would result in a less-efficient power plant. FQR alleges that the efficiency calculations completed by the applicant and reviewed by DEP staff are incomplete because they did not include cold-weather operation.

Response: The testimony of the applicant's expert, David Lesneski, and the exhibits, including the alternatives analysis presented, support the hearing officer's finding. The finding is based on the overall testimony. Mr. Lesneski's efficiency calculations are based on ground placement of air cooling equipment which is ideal from an efficiency standpoint for air cooling. If Mr. Lesneski based calculations on FQR's preferred roof-mounted approach, the efficiency difference between wet and dry cooling arguably would have been greater. Mr. Lesneski's acknowledgement under cross examination that air cooling fans may be turned off in the winter did not alter his conclusion and does not change the evidence that air cooling is less efficient. FQR presented no evidence on air cooling and did not rebut Mr. Lesneski's testimony. DEP-DIS-31L, Tab M, test. D. Lesneski, 8/26/08.

b. <u>Para. 3</u>: FQR takes exception to the findings on dust and its potential exacerbation from roof-mounted air cooling condenser fans.

Response: The applicant will control dust through the size specifications, operational protocols, and dust control methods, such as misting equipment. The point raised in Mr. Lesneski's testimony is that dust from the unloading and moving of fuel materials is different from dust potentially generated by the consistent updraft from the cooling fans when placed near piles of solid fuel. Test. D. Lesneski, 8/26/08.

c. <u>Para. 4</u>: FQR takes exception to findings on noise because under cross examination, Mr. Lesneski testified that he is aware there are low-noise fan modules.

Response: The potential for noise from the air cooled condensers is in evidence through Mr. Lesneski's testimony. Mr. Lesneski's acknowledgement that low noise fans exist is not evidence of their viability for a biomass fueled power plant or for this particular facility. Any noise is compounded by roof-mounted equipment that would be placed at a height beyond the effectiveness of noise control structures. DEP-DIV-31L, Tab M and R, test. D. Lesneski, 8/26/08.

d. <u>Para. 5</u>: FQR takes exception to a finding that the "use of roof mounted equipment would only address the impact of dry cooling on Hinckley soils" on the basis that while it is a true statement, it is also incomplete. In addition, the exception alleges that Ms. Radasci testified that DEP did not consider a cooling configuration which would have reduced the site footprint.

Response: Later findings address the decreased impact to Hinckley soils from roof-mounted air cooling equipment. In addition, the record clearly shows that the Department asked for additional information on roof-mounted equipment and further explanation of cost of the air cooled facility. DEP-DIV-31L, Tab R; DEP-DIV-22.

e. <u>Para. 6</u>: FQR alleges that the cost figures are not truly accurate due to price fluctuations in the commodities necessary for construction.

Response: FQR did not present evidence or testimony on the cost of the facility using air cooling as opposed to wet cooling. The applicant did present this evidence including price quotes from dealers of air cooled equipment. Furthermore, fluctuations in pricing would seem to affect cost figures for both cooling technologies. DEP-DIV-31L, Tab M, test. D. Lesneski, 8/26/08.

5. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 48</u>: FQR takes exception to this finding because it believes that the applicant did not avoid or minimize the impact to wetlands areas, species habitat, including the Hinckley soils, and vernal pools. FQR states that the only way to minimize the impact to these resources is through the use of roof-mounted air cooling equipment.

Response: FQR's opinion is not supported by the evidence. FQR did not provide sufficient evidence in the record that roof mounted air cooling would be a viable option to further avoid or minimize impacts to these resources. For the selected cooling technology, confirmed through evidence to be the best available, the applicant did avoid or minimize impacts to these resources and this was confirmed by multiple DEP staff members in memos submitted as exhibits and in direct testimony. DEP-DIV-4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 31L.

6. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 49</u>: FQR takes exception to the hearing officer's finding that the applicant "avoided impacts to Hinckley soils and wetland resources at the Man-Burch Property," for the reasons stated in Exception to Finding of Fact No. 48.

<u>Response</u>: Please see Exception to Finding of Fact No. 48, and the Response thereto. Such Response also pertains to this Exception.

7. Exception to Finding of Fact No. 50: FQR takes exception to the use of DEP's calculated low-flow figures of 84.43 cubic feet per second ("cfs") because Dr. Parasiewicz's testified that he has observed flows as low as 1 cfs.

Response: Dr. Parasiewicz's testimony is based on observations during a limited time period. It is also not clearly stated in the record that this condition was observed in the location of the intake. Dr. Parasiewicz did not dispute DEP's calculations and only indicated possible instances of flow levels lower than the 7Q10 figure used. Test. P. Parasiewicz, 8/29/08.

8. Exception to Finding of Fact No. 51: FQR takes exception to the finding that multiple DEP staff members were consulted on the impact of the proposed withdrawal and the basis for its exception was Ms. Miner's testimony that the Quinebaug River Watershed Coordinator was only consulted the day of the hearing.

Response: The finding made by the hearing officer is supported by the evidence in the record. See exhibits listed in the Response to the Exception to Finding of Fact No. 48.

9. Exception to Finding of Fact No. 52: FQR takes exception to the finding that the thermal plume will have a minimal effect on fish habitat.

Response: Dr. Parasiewicz's testimony on loss of fish habitat was based specifically on cold water/riverine species that he believes should be present throughout the entire stretch of the Quinebaug River. Brian Murphy of DEP Fisheries testified that this area is impounded and is a warm water/pond fish habitat. Mr. Murphy clearly stated on the record that the proposed thermal impact will not affect those species present at the intake and discharge location. Dr. Parasiewicz acknowledged that the thermal impact would have minimal impact on these species. DEP-DIV-17, test. B. Murphy, 8/27/08, P. Parasiewicz, 8/29/08.

10. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 55</u>: FQR takes exception to the finding that there is no permanent impact to navigation because a buoy will be present marking the location of the intake structure.

Response: The evidence does not show that a buoy is an impediment to navigation. The fixed structures will be on the river bottom and will not impact navigation except for temporary impacts during their construction. The record does show, however, that the proposed discharge structure is downstream of the intake and not upstream as referenced in this finding. App. 33. This correction does not alter any other findings or conclusions.

11. Exception to Finding of Fact No. 58: FQR indicates that there is not "a pipeline" as described in this finding, but two pipelines, one to the plant and one from the plant.

Response: The record shows that there are two pipelines. App. 33. This correction does not alter any other findings or conclusions.

12. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 60</u>: FQR indicates that the discharge is downstream of the intake and not upstream as indicated in this finding.

Response: The record shows that the discharge is downstream of the intake. App. 33. This correction does not alter any other findings or conclusions.

13. Exception to Finding of Fact No. 61: FQR takes exception to the finding that sample testing revealed no toxicity. FQR's reasoning is that the tests were incomplete because they failed to include contaminants that will allegedly become entrained in the cooling water and part of the discharge.

Response: FQR's belief that ambient pollutants will become entrained in cooling water, on which no evidence was received, does not alter this finding. The samples used to mimic the potential discharge using twice the amount of treatment chemicals and river water at five times concentration showed no toxicity. Furthermore, the permit requires the applicant to submit a complete discharge

analysis on or before sixty days after the initiation of the discharges and continue toxicity testing throughout the duration of the permit. DEP-DIS-27, Sections 6(B), 6(C), and 9(A).

14. Exception to Finding of Fact No. 62: FQR takes exception to the finding that the thermal discharge would have a negligible impact on the Quinebaug River and its resources, and would therefore not violate water quality standards. FQR bases its exception on the listing of this segment of the river as impaired for recreational uses due to *e coli* levels (used as the indicator for fecal matter contamination).

Response: DEP staff acknowledged that this segment of the river had been assessed and testified that it is listed as impaired due to e coli levels. Lee Dunbar testified that the proposed diversion and discharge would not affect the e coli levels or further compound the river's impairment. Test. L. Dunbar, 8/28/08. In addition, it is not clear from the record that Dr. Parasiewicz testified that the resulting thermal plume would result in increased e coli; rather, the record shows that Dr. Parasiewicz offered no analysis of the specific thermal plume proposed to be generated but offered that increases in temperature could present better conditions for e coli to grow. Test. P. Parasiewicz 8/29/08, Track 1, 40:00. There was no evidence given about the specific level at which this would occur or if the proposed discharge and resulting thermal plume would specifically affect this issue given its limited size. Finally, there was no testimony that indicates that this alleged impact would be "unreasonable" because there was no comparison offered between specific levels of e coli now and those anticipated after the proposed activity begins. The Connecticut Water Quality Standards indicate that the thermal plume shall be no greater than 25% of the cross sectional area of a river. PRE's calculations, accepted by DEP staff, demonstrate that the proposed thermal plume will meet this standard (0.7 % in summer, low-flow conditions and 0.3% in winter, mean -flow conditions). See DEP-DIS-26, APP-38. Furthermore, the permit requires the applicant to submit a scope of study and schedule for performing thermal field monitoring verification work. DEP-DIS-27, Section 9 (B).

15. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 63</u>: FQR takes exception to Finding of Fact No. 63 and references its remarks relative to its Exception to Finding of Fact No. 62.

Response: Please see Exception to Finding of Fact No. 62, and the Response thereto. Such Response also pertains to this Exception.

16. Exception to Finding of Fact No. 64: FQR alleges that the hearing officer's finding that phosphorous already present in the river will remain and be discharged back to the river is true but incomplete. The problem, FQR says, is a lack of discussion concerning a need to reduce phosphorous concentration levels. FQR relies upon Mr. Kuloweic's testimony.

Response: Mr. Kulowiec did not testify that phosphorous concentrations in the discharge would "probably be higher." He testified that while phosphorous may be reduced on a mass basis by the treatment chemicals, it probably would not be reduced on a concentration basis. Any acknowledgment by Mr. Kulowiec that the phosphorous discharge on a concentration basis would not

be reduced by the treatment chemicals is addressed by toxicity testing done of river water at five times concentration. This would include any background phosphorous. The only phosphorous to be discharged is that already present in the river water. The applicant agreed not to add any additional phosphorous compounds into the treatment process due to DEP concerns about nutrient loading in the River. DEP-DIS-4, DEP-DIV-31L, Tab R; test. J. Kulowiec, 8/27/08.

17. Exception to Finding of Fact No. 65: FQR takes exception to the hearing officer's statement that the applicant's discharge is not a source of *e coli* and will not contribute to a segment of the Quinebaug River being identified as impaired.

Response: Please see Exception to Finding of Fact No. 62, and the Response thereto. Such Response also pertains to this Exception.

18. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 68</u>: FQR takes exception to the finding that closed cycle cooling is the best technology available.

Response: The exception is based on characterizations of the evidence given by the applicant and DEP staff. FQR presented no direct testimony to support its position that a viable, better technology exists. Test. D. Lesneski, 8/26/08, DEP-DIS-23.

19. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 69</u>: FQR takes exception to this finding on the overall decrease in plant efficiency when comparing wet cooling to air cooling.

Response: See the discussion regarding Finding of Fact No. 45 and the inefficiency of air cooling as demonstrated by the evidence. FQR provided no evidence of its assertions that the modeling used by the applicant to calculate the plant efficiency was inappropriate and therefore inconclusive.

20. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 70</u>: FQR takes exception to this finding because it links air cooling to an increased impact to Hinckley soils when roof-mounted equipment would not have this impact.

Response: It is found that Finding of Fact No. 70 was intended to discuss the ground placement of air cooling equipment whereas the following finding, No. 71, was intended to discuss the impacts associated with roof mounted air cooling. The impacts from roof-mounted air cooling equipment do not include impacts to Hinckley soils. The roof mounted layout was considered by DEP as evidenced by DEP-DIV-31L, Tab R.

21. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 71</u>: FQR takes exception to the statement regarding the spacing of fans with roof-mounted equipment.

Response: A statement regarding the spacing of fans was included in the response to DEP's questions on roof-mounted air cooling. See DEP-DIV-31L, Tab R. The applicant's expert provided

additional evidence on impacts of a roof-mounted installation relating to plant efficiency, fuel consumption, and air pollution. The site constraints were among several factors considered by DEP and the applicant in rejecting the air-cooled alternative. FQR presented no evidence on this issue. Test. S. Radasci, 8/28/08, D. Lesneski, 8/26/08.

22. <u>Exception to Finding of Fact No. 74</u>: FQR takes exception to this finding regarding Dr. Parasiewicz's testimony alleging that it does not fully represent the breadth of his testimony.

Response: This finding was clearly not intended to be a complete synopsis of Dr. Parasiewicz's testimony. There are no misstatements of fact in connection with this Finding of Fact.

## B. <u>Exceptions to Conclusions of Law</u>

FQR does not reference specific conclusions in its exceptions to the hearing officer's proposed conclusions of law. Set forth below is a brief summary of FQR's statements and the Commissioner's response thereto.

- 1. In statement one, FQR appears to misstate the applicant's burden. The applicant's burden is to prove that its applications comply with the applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. It is not the applicant's burden to prove that their activities will not impair the state's resources; rather, it FQR's burden to prove unreasonable pollution, destruction, or impairment of the air, water, or other natural resources. The burden to prove no unreasonable impairment did not shift to the applicant because FQR failed to make a prima facie case of unreasonable pollution.
- 2. Statement two appears to state FQR's opinion that the applicant should not be issued DEP permits. The reason provided by FQR is that the public trust would be violated. FQR is entitled to its opinion; however, the record supports the issuance of the permits to the applicant.
- 3. Statement three reiterates FQR's concerns about *e coli*. Dr. Parasiweicz's testimony is not clear evidence that *e coli* levels would increase or that this alleged increase is unreasonable.
- 4. Statement four attempts to describe an impact that was not in the record. There is no evidence in the record regarding the visual impacts of the cooling tower plume.
- 5. Statement five merely questions the DEP's ability to monitor compliance even though FQR did not submit evidence into the record on this issue.

- 6. Statement six restates FQR's concern about the river segment's impairment listing due to *e coli* and provides FQR's opinion that the testimony of Dr. Parasiewicz was minimized or diminished. Again, FQR is entitled to its opinion, however, the hearing officer's conclusions are supported by the record evidence, to include Dr. Parasiewicz's testimony, which was clearly taken into account.
- 7. In statement seven, FQR takes exception to the conclusion that it only established the possibility of impairment. FQR bases its exception on the designation of this segment of the Quinebaug River as impaired on the DEP 303(d) report that became final after the close of the hearing, the draft of said report which was submitted as evidence. The reference to impairment in this particular paragraph of the Conclusions of Law is a reference to the requirement that FQR's burden was to prove unreasonable pollution, destruction or "impairment." It was not intended to mean that the Quinebaug River is not impaired under the CWA. The impaired status, however, is not linked to activities of PRE or its proposed discharge and the proposed diversion. DEP staff testified that the status of this segment as impaired for *e coli* had no impact on its conclusion that the proposed discharge and diversion, including the thermal component would not violate Water Quality Standards. The fact that the Quinebaug River is listed as impaired is not itself evidence that the proposed activities will cause unreasonable pollution or impairment. Test. L. Dunbar, 8/28/08.

### III. Modifications to Proposed Final Decision

A January 30, 2008 decision of the Connecticut Department of Public Utility Control concerning its review of long term renewable contracts is included within the record of the DEP's proceeding. App-30. In that decision, it was reported that the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund ("CCEF"), as it considered the financial viability of the applicant and others, reviewed, among other things, the availability of construction and demolition ("C&D") and clean wood to fuel the applicant's facility. See App-34, pp. 24-30. CCEF reviewed information dating back to a 2004 and 2005 Antares Fuel Supply Assessment and a 2006 NESCAUM study. What is not readily apparent in the DEP's record is whether the applicant's fuel supply information is still current today, given this region's changed economic conditions. What is clear from the DEP's record is that PRE represented that it had seven suppliers that had "formalized their interest to provide acceptable wood biomass to the facility." DEP-SW-1, tab P.

The Department's role in this proceeding is not to ascertain whether the applicant indeed has its fuel supply sources lined up; rather, it is to ensure compliance with the applicable environmental statutes and regulations which, more specifically means that the applicant's wood fuel must comply with permit conditions and cannot contain any hazardous waste as defined in General Statutes § 22a-115. To that end, to ensure compliance with General Statute § 22a-208a and its associated regulations, the applicant shall, for the duration of its permit, retain the services of a fuel quality management monitor. This monitor shall be a licensed environmental professional, wholly independent from PRE and its contractors, and subject to the approval of the Commissioner. The Commissioner shall be notified of PRE's choice of monitor no less than 30 days prior to its acceptance of wood fuel for use at its facility.

The applicant shall not receive any wood fuel for use at its facility unless it has obtained the prior, written approval of the Commissioner that the monitor meets with her approval. Such approval will not be unreasonably withheld. The Commissioner shall not be precluded from finding a previously acceptable monitor unacceptable, thus requiring the selection of a new fuel quality management monitor who is subject to the Commissioner's approval. More than one person may be needed to satisfy the duties of the fuel quality management monitor.

The independent fuel quality management monitor shall:

- Visit the sites (whether fixed locations or where the wood is harvested) and inspect the
  operations of and types of material handled by prospective suppliers of wood fuel to ascertain
  whether each such supplier is eligible to provide wood to the applicant for use at its facility in
  accordance with the applicant's permit;
- Provide oversight to the applicant, prior to the applicant's execution of contracts with its suppliers, consistent with the protocols set forth in DEP-SW-1, Tab N, to ensure that only approved suppliers that have completed PRE's prequalification process will be granted access to the facility for fuel deliveries;
- Conduct periodic site visits and inspections at the suppliers' sites to evaluate the consistency of
  the wood fuel deliveries to that which the supplier is authorized to deliver, evaluate consistency
  with PRE's size requirements, and provide oversight to the applicant that would enable it to
  conduct unannounced sampling and/or detailed analysis of wood fuel supplies;
- Conduct periodic, unannounced site visits to the applicant's facility to inspect the operations of and types of material handled by the applicant, and take samples of wood fuel for assessment, whether through visual inspection, field analysis, or laboratory analysis;
- Identify and immediately report in writing any violation of the applicant's permit to the applicant and the Commissioner; and
- Compile and submit reports for each day worked and issue monthly reports to the Department in a format approved by the Commissioner.

The applicant shall allow the fuel quality management monitor full and unimpeded access to its site, wood fuel and related records. The applicant shall keep the monitor informed as to all sources of its wood fuel and the results of any assessments performed on such wood fuel.

## IV. <u>Conclusion</u>

The record of the proceeding concerning the five permit applications supports the hearing officer's Proposed Final Decision. The proposed decision is therefore adopted except as expressly provided herein. Also adopted is the hearing officer's recommendation, with additional modifications, to issue the draft permits to the applicant. All modifications noted herein should be included in the final permits to be issued.

3/2/09

Date

Gina McCarthy, Commissioner

Department of Environmental Protection

# PARTY LIST

## In the matter of Plainfield Renewable Energy

**PARTY** 

REPRESENTED BY

**Applicant** 

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**Discharge Permits** 

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