

Homebuilder, Ryland Group Inc., will pay \$625,000 to resolve Clean Water Act violations

10. October 2011 By Sarah Riley Howard

Ryland Group Inc., one of the nation's largest homebuilders, will pay a civil penalty of \$625,000 to resolve alleged Clean Water Act violations at its construction sites. The Department of Justice and the Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") allege that Ryland failed to obtain permits and did not comply with permit requirements for preventing stormwater runoff at their construction sites. In addition to the penalty, the settlement requires Ryland to improve its compliance programs, and in particular its employee training and management oversight, at all current and future construction sites. In addition to the federal government, seven states—Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Nevada, and Virginia—will share a portion of the \$625,000 fine.

The Clean Water Act requires permits for the discharge of stormwater runoff. Permits at construction sites often require the building company to implement a plan to prevent pollution from being discharged with stormwater into nearby waterways. These controls include silt fences and phased site grading and sediment basins, for example.

According to the EPA, construction projects have a high potential for environmental harm because they disturb large areas of land and increase the likelihood of erosion. Without onsite pollution controls, sediment-laden runoff from construction sites can flow directly into nearby waters and decrease drinking water quality. Furthermore, the stormwater often mixes with other pollutants, including paint, used oil, and trash, and the polluted runoff harms wildlife and natural ecosystems.

This settlement is the latest in a series of enforcement actions to address stormwater violations from residential construction sites across the country. In the press release announcing the Ryland settlement, the EPA reiterated that keeping contaminated stormwater out of America's waters continues to be one of its national enforcement initiatives.