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TENNESSEE MAN AND COMPANY PLEAD GUILTY TO VIOLATING THE CLEAN WATER ACT

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – On August 20, 2024, Christopher Domermuth, 49, and Domermuth Environmental Services, LLC (“DES”), based in Knoxville, both pleaded guilty today to violating the Clean Water Act by knowingly discharging pollutants into a navigable waterway without a permit, in violation of 33 U.S.C. §§ 1311 and 1319(c), in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee at Knoxville. Mr. Domermuth faces a maximum term of up to three years in Federal prison, followed by a term of supervised release of up to one year.

According to court documents, Mr. Domermuth operated DES, which was engaged in the business of processing petroleum-contaminated soil and water in Knoxville. On July 26, 2018, DES workers rolled over a previously exhumed underground storage tank which spilled a mixture of petroleum and water onto a concrete pad at the facility. DES employees and Mr. Domermuth threw absorbent pads into the spilled mixture and then used a portable pump to pump the petroleum-contaminated mixture over a retaining wall at DES. The oily mixture flowed over a neighboring property and into a culvert leading to the Holston River.

“Domermuth Environmental Services and Christopher Domermuth were supposed to be cleaning up contaminated water and soil to protect the environment, but instead caused the discharge of pollutants. These felony guilty pleas demonstrate our commitment to enforcing the Clean Water Act,” said Assistant Attorney General Kim.

“Our office is committed to protecting our natural resources in East Tennessee,” said United States Attorney Francis M. Hamilton III. “I applaud the collaborative efforts of the federal and state law enforcement agencies that brought these violators to justice.”

This prosecution was the result of a joint investigation between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - Criminal Investigation Division, EPA - Office of Inspector General (OIG), the Tennessee Valley Authority-OIG, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation conducted the investigation. Senior Trial Attorney Matthew T. Morris of the Department of Justice’s Environmental Crimes Section and Assistant United States Attorney Jeremy S. Dykes are prosecuting the case on behalf of the United States.

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