

Utah man sentenced to 20 years in prison for environmental, other crimes

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(Denver, Colo. - October 14, 2009) Larkin Baggett, 54, formerly of Salt Lake City, Utah, was sentenced to 20 years in the U.S. District Court in Key West, Fla. jail today for illegally dumping pollutants in violation of federal clean water and hazardous waste regulations and for illegally possessing firearms and aggravated assault on law enforcement officers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice announced.

This includes the maximum jail term for the Clean Water Act and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act violations. Last March, Baggett assaulted EPA and other law enforcement officers when they attempted to arrest him in Marathon, Fla.

"EPA's professional and dedicated law enforcement special agents are the 'line in the sand' against those who put illegal gain ahead of public health and the environment," said Cynthia Giles, Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "EPA will continue to vigorously pursue criminal violations of environmental regulations."

In September 2007, Baggett was indicted on charges related to illegally dumping various pollutants onto the ground and into a drain that led to the treatment plant operated by the South Davis Sewer Improvement District in West Bountiful, Utah between October 2004 and April 2005. The treatment plant had a permit to discharge treated effluent to the Jordan River, which empties into the Great Salt Lake.

According to court records, Baggett instructed his employees to dispose of industrial wastes by dumping them onto the ground and into a sanitary sewer drain, which fed directly to the wastewater treatment plant. One of the wastes, nonylphenol, is a powerful organic chemical and heavy-duty industrial cleaner that is toxic to aquatic life. Baggett's actions allegedly caused the plant to violate permit limits for acute toxicity 22 times.

Previously, government officials from the local sewer district prohibited Baggett's company from discharging to the sewer system because its wastes had routinely exceeded limits for certain pollutants.

Baggett owned and operated Chemical Consultants, Inc., North Salt Lake City, Utah, a company that mixed and sold chemical products used in the trucking, construction, and concrete industries.

In April 2008, two months before his trial, Baggett became a fugitive when he failed to appear in court, as required by the conditions of his release and bond. In December 2008, EPA received a tip from the public regarding his potential whereabouts after Baggett was listed on the EPA's fugitive website (<http://www.epa.gov/fugitives>).

EPA requires the proper handling and disposal of hazardous wastes to protect human health and the environment. EPA requires that industry pre-treat toxic pollutants chemicals in their wastes in order to protect local sewers and wastewater treatment plants. The pretreatment process also ensures that these pollutants do not pass through the treatment process into rivers, lakes and streams.

The environmental case was investigated by EPA's Office of Criminal Enforcement. The assault and gun charges were investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Monroe County, Fla. Sheriff's Office, and the U.S. Marshall's Service. The case was prosecuted in the District of South Florida by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Jodi Mazer and Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Watts-Fitzgerald and in the District of Utah by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jared C. Bennett.

More information on Baggett case: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/criminal/fugitives/fugitives-captured.html#baggett>