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PRESS RELEASE

Omega Protein Companies Agree to Pay \$1 Million to Resolve Allegations They Misrepresented Compliance with Environmental Laws to Obtain a Federal Loan

Monday, January 28, 2019

For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

Omega Protein Corp. and Omega Protein, Inc. (collectively “Omega”) have agreed to pay \$1 million to resolve allegations that Omega obtained a loan from the United States by falsely certifying compliance with federal environmental laws, the Department of Justice announced today. The matter was unsealed on Jan. 17, 2019.

Omega is based in Houston, Texas, and is a leading domestic producer of Omega-3 rich fish oil, protein-rich specialty fishmeal, and organic fish solubles for livestock and aquaculture feed manufacturers.

“This settlement demonstrates our continuing vigilance in protecting the integrity of federal programs and taxpayer dollars,” said Assistant Attorney General Jody Hunt of the Department of Justice’s Civil Division. “Companies will face appropriate consequences if they misrepresent their eligibility to participate in federal programs and divert resources from those who should receive federal support.”

“Businessmen and companies that lie to get their hands on taxpayer money will be held accountable for their actions,” said U.S. Attorney David C. Joseph. “When some people cheat, those who play by the rules are put at a disadvantage. This million dollar payment from Omega Protein to the U.S. Treasury is part of our ongoing effort to combat fraud and protect the taxpayer’s dollar.”

The settlement announced today resolves allegations that Omega violated the False Claims Act in March 2010 when it certified to the Department of Commerce that it was complying with federal environmental laws to obtain a \$10 million loan. At the time Omega submitted the certification, it was knowingly violating the Clean Water Act (CWA). In 2013, Omega Protein, Inc. pled guilty to violations of the CWA between May 2008 and December 2010, by unlawfully discharging pollutants into U.S. waters and, between April 2009 and September 2010, by unlawfully discharging a harmful quantity of oil into U.S. waters. The criminal matter was *United States v. Omega Protein Inc.* No. 2:13-cr-00043-RAJ-TEM (E.D. Va.).

The civil settlement results from a lawsuit brought by Keland O. Harrison, a former employee of Omega, filed under the *qui tam*, or whistleblower, provisions of the False Claims Act, which permit private citizens to bring suit on behalf of the United States for false claims, and share in any recovery. As part of today’s resolution, Mr. Harrison will receive \$200,000 of the settlement proceeds.

The settlement was the result of a coordinated effort by the Civil Division of the Department of Justice, the United States Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Louisiana, and the United States Department of Commerce.

The civil case is captioned *United States ex rel. Harrison v. Omega Protein Corp. and Omega Protein, Inc.*, Civil Action No.16-cv-00359 (W.D. La.). The claims resolved by the settlement, except as admitted in the criminal plea, are allegations only, and there has been no determination of liability.

Updated February 5, 2025

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Press Release Number: 19-48

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