

much time as possible to process your request.

Andrew D. Sawyers,
Director, Office of Wastewater Management,
Office of Water.

[FR Doc. 2024–29240 Filed 12–11–24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560–50–P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL–6464.1–04–R10]

Modification of the NPDES General Permit for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) Located in Idaho Excluding Tribal Lands (IDG010000)

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Modification of NPDES general permit.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 10, is modifying the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) in Idaho excluding Tribal lands (IDG010000).

DATES: The issuance date of this modification is December 12, 2024. The modified general permit will be effective February 1, 2025. The general permit will expire on June 14, 2025.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the modified general permit, fact sheet addendums and response to comments document are available online: <https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/npdes-general-permit-concentrated-animal-feeding-operations-cafos-idaho>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests may be made to Audrey Washington at (206) 553–0523 or to Nicholas Peak at (208) 378–5765. Requests may also be electronically mailed to: washington.audrey@epa.gov or peak.nicholas@epa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The modification is a major modification pursuant to 40 CFR 122.62(a)(15). The EPA Region 10 reissued the NPDES General Permit for CAFOs in Idaho (IDG010000) on May 13, 2020; the general permit became effective on June 15, 2020 (85 FR 28624).

Subsequently, a Petition for Review was filed on September 22, 2020, in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, challenging the general permit on the basis that it did not contain representative effluent monitoring to ensure compliance with all applicable effluent limitations in violation of the Clean Water Act and implementing

regulations (*Food & Water Watch et al v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency* (No. 20–71554)). The Court granted the petition holding that the general permit failed to include monitoring to ensure compliance with the discharge prohibitions in the general permit. The general permit remained in effect while the EPA worked to address the issues. The modified general permit includes new and revised conditions to address the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal’s Order and Opinion filed on December 16, 2021 (*Food & Water Watch et al. v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency* (No. 20–71554)). The modified general permit will transfer to the State of Idaho as part of the phased implementation of Idaho’s administration of the NPDES program. The EPA will remain the permitting authority for CAFO facilities located in Indian Country in Idaho.

The EPA opened two public comment periods on proposed modifications to the existing general permit, one on July 18, 2023 (88 FR 45900) and one on June 6, 2024 (89 FR 48428). The EPA received comments from four organizations/entities on the 2023 permit modification, and from five organizations/entities on the 2024 permit modification. A Response to Comments document was prepared to respond to public comments received and explain any changes made to the draft modified general permit to produce a final modified general permit.

Other Legal Requirements

This permit modification action is not a significant regulatory action and was therefore not submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review. Compliance with Endangered Species Act, Essential Fish Habitat, Paperwork Reduction Act, and other requirements are discussed in the original 2019 Fact Sheet to the general permit.

Appeal of Permit

Any interested person may appeal the final permit action on or before April 11, 2025 (*i.e.*, 120 days from the issuance date of this general permit) in the Federal Court of Appeals in accordance with section 509(b)(1) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. 1369(b)(1).

Mathew Martinson,

Director, Water Division, Region 10.

[FR Doc. 2024–29241 Filed 12–11–24; 8:45 am]

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

[DA 24–1131; FR ID 264852]

Notice of Suspension and Commencement of Proposed Debarment Proceedings; Federal Lifeline Program

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Enforcement Bureau (the “Bureau”) gives notice of the suspension of Issa Asad from the federal Lifeline program (Lifeline Program) and all federal universal service support mechanisms. Additionally, the Bureau gives notice that debarment proceedings are commencing against Mr. Asad. Mr. Asad, or any person who has an existing contract with or intends to contract with Mr. Asad to provide or receive services in matters arising out of activities associated with or related to the Lifeline Program, may respond by filing an opposition request, supported by documentation.

DATES: Opposition requests must be submitted within 30 days of receiving the suspension letter or by January 13, 2025, whichever comes first. The Bureau will decide on any opposition request within 90 days.

ADDRESSES: Federal Communications Commission, Enforcement Bureau, Investigations and Hearings Division, 45 L Street, NE, Washington, DC 20554.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christina Thomas, Federal Communications Commission, Enforcement Bureau, Investigations and Hearings Division, 45 L Street, NE, Washington, DC 20554. Christina Thomas may be contacted by phone at (202) 418–1879 or email at Christina.Thomas@fcc.gov. If Ms. Thomas is unavailable, you may contact Mr. Christopher J. Sova, Acting Chief, Investigations and Hearings Division, by telephone at (202) 418–1868 or by email at Christopher.Sova@fcc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Bureau has suspension and debarment authority pursuant to 47 CFR 54.8 and 47 CFR 0.111(a)(14). Suspensions ensure that suspended parties cannot continue to benefit from the Lifeline Program pending resolution of the debarment process. Attached is the public redacted version of the suspension letter, DA 24–1131, which was mailed to Mr. Asad and released on December 12, 2024. The complete text of the notice of suspension and initiation of debarment proceedings is available on the FCC’s website at

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-24-1131A1.pdf>.

Federal Communications Commission.

Christopher Sova,

Acting Chief, Investigations and Hearings Division, Enforcement Bureau.

November 8, 2024

DA 24-1131

VIA E-MAIL

Mr. Issa Asad, Chief Executive Officer, Q Link Wireless LLC, 499 E Sheridan St., Ste 400, Dania, FL 33004, issa@quadrantholdings.com

VIA E-MAIL and VIA HAND DELIVERY

John T. Nakahata, Esq., HWG LLP, 1919 M Street NW, Eighth Floor, Washington, DC 20036, JNakahata@hwglaw.com

Samuel L. Feder, Esq., Jenner & Block LLP, 1099 New York Avenue NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20001, SFeder@jenner.com

Re: Notice of suspension and initiation of debarment proceeding File No. EB-IHD-24-00037459

Dear Messrs. Asad, Nakahata, and Feder:

The Enforcement Bureau (Bureau) of the Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC) has received notice of your conviction for conspiring to commit offenses against the United States, specifically, (a) wire fraud, (b) theft of government funds, and (c) defrauding the United States, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 1343, 641, and 371, respectively, all in connection with fraudulent claims against the federal Lifeline program (Lifeline program).¹ The conspiracy involved submitting and causing to be submitted “false and fraudulent claims to the FCC Lifeline program for [Q Link] customers who were not using their cellphones according to the FCC usage rules.”² Consequently, pursuant to 47 CFR 54.8, this letter constitutes official notice of your suspension from the Lifeline program and all federal universal service support mechanisms.³

Effective immediately upon receipt of this letter, you are prohibited from participating in or receiving any benefit associated with the Lifeline program as well as any other program funded by federal universal service support mechanisms.

The Bureau hereby is also commencing a proceeding to debar you from future participation in all federal universal support mechanisms.⁴ The Commission is required

¹ Any further reference in this letter to “your conviction” refers to your guilty plea agreement and factual proffer in *United States v. Issa Asad*, Criminal Docket No. 1:24-cr-20363-RAR, Plea Agreement (S.D. Fla., filed Oct. 15, 2024) (*Plea Agreement*). See also *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization*, WC Docket No. 11-42, CC Docket No. 96-45, WC Docket No. 03-109, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 27 FCC Rcd 6656 (2012) (*Lifeline Reform Order*).

² *United States v. Issa Asad*, Criminal Docket No. 1:24-cr-20363-RAR, Factual Proffer, at 3 (S.D. Fla., filed Oct. 15, 2024) (*Proffer*).

³ 47 CFR 54.8.

⁴ *Id.*; 47 CFR 0.111 (delegating to the Bureau authority to resolve universal service suspension and debarment proceedings). In 2007, the

by its rules to debar Q Link “absent extraordinary circumstances, notwithstanding any criminal process to which you are subject.”⁵

I. Notice of Suspension

Any person that has “defrauded the government or engaged in similar acts through activities associated with or related to the [Lifeline program]” may be prohibited from receiving the benefits associated with that program.⁶ The Lifeline program is a federal government program that provides support to eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) that in turn offer discounts on telephone and broadband service for eligible low-income consumers.⁷ An ETC may receive reimbursement in connection with the Lifeline program only if it certifies as part of its reimbursement request that it is in compliance with the Lifeline rules.⁸

Since 2012, you served as the Chief Executive Officer of Q Link Wireless LLC (Q Link). On October 15, 2024, and your company, Q Link pleaded guilty to “purposely defraud[ing] two critical federal programs helping individuals and businesses suffering financial hardship, unlawfully taking hundreds of millions of dollars for [your] own use and profit, while obstructing the United States’ ability to help people who . . . needed it.”⁹ Your misleading practices, deceptive call activity, falsified documents and threatening customer service scripts, directed at Q Link customers, coerced them into accepting Lifeline services and agreeing to remain Q Link customers.¹⁰ Although the Lifeline usage rules required Q Link to disenroll and stop seeking reimbursement for customers who had not used their cellphones in a 45-day window (90-day window for 2016), you continued to bill the Lifeline program for Q Link customers that you knew were no longer eligible because they were not using, and in some instances, no longer even had their cellphones.¹¹ From 2013 to 2021,

Commission extended the debarment rules to apply to all federal universal service support mechanisms, including Lifeline. See *Comprehensive Review of the Universal Service Fund Management, Administration, & Oversight*, Report and Order, 22 FCC Rcd 16372, 16410-12 (2007) (*Program Management Order*) (renumbering Section 54.521 of the universal service debarment rules as Section 54.8 and amending subsections (a)(1), (a)(5), (c), (d), (e)(2)(i), (e)(3), (e)(4), and (g)).

⁵ 47 CFR 54.8(b); *Plea Agreement* at 3.

⁶ *Program Management Order*, 22 FCC Rcd at 16387, para. 32. The Commission’s debarment rules define a “person” as “[a]ny individual, group of individuals, corporation, partnership, association, unit of government or legal entity, however organized.” 47 CFR 54.8(a)(6).

⁷ See *Lifeline Reform Order*, *supra* note 1, 27 FCC Rcd at 6662-67, paras. 11-18; see also 47 CFR 54.400-54.422.

⁸ See 47 CFR 54.407(d).

⁹ United States Attorney’s Office, Southern District of Florida, Press Release, *Nationwide Telecommunications Provider and its CEO Plead Guilty to Massively Defrauding Federal Government Programs Meant to Aid the Needy*, October 15, 2024, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdfl/pr/nationwide-telecommunications-provider-and-its-ceo-plead-guilty-massively-defrauding> (last visited October 22, 2024).

¹⁰ *Proffer*, *supra* note 2, at 2-4.

¹¹ See generally *Proffer*, *supra* note 2.

you personally amassed over \$15,000,000 through your fraudulent Lifeline schemes.¹² Between 2013 and 2019, Q Link received \$618,736,494 from the Lifeline program, 21 percent of which resulted from fraudulent Lifeline claims.¹³

Pursuant to Section 54.8(b) of the Commission’s rules,¹⁴ your conviction requires the Bureau to suspend you from: (a) participating in any activities associated with or related to the Lifeline program, including receiving funds or discounted services through the Lifeline program, or consulting with, assisting, or advising applicants or service providers regarding the Lifeline program; and (b) participating in any activities associated with or related to all federal universal service support mechanisms.¹⁵ Your suspension becomes effective upon either your receipt of this letter or publication of the suspension in the **Federal Register**, whichever occurs first.¹⁶

In accordance with the Commission’s suspension and debarment rules, you may contest this suspension or its scope by filing arguments, with any relevant documents, within thirty (30) calendar days of its receipt of this letter or publication of the suspension in the **Federal Register**, whichever occurs first.¹⁷ Such requests, however, will not ordinarily be granted.¹⁸ The Bureau may reverse or limit the scope of a suspension only upon a finding of extraordinary circumstances.¹⁹ The Bureau will decide any request to reverse or modify a suspension within ninety (90) calendar days of its receipt of such request.²⁰

II. Initiation of Debarment Proceedings

In addition to your immediate suspension from all universal service support mechanisms, including the Lifeline program, your conviction is cause for debarment as defined in Section 54.8(c) of the Commission’s rules.²¹ Therefore, pursuant to Section 54.8(b) of the Commission’s rules, your conviction requires the Bureau to commence debarment proceedings against you.²²

¹² *Id.* at 5.

¹³ *Id.* at 6.

¹⁴ 47 CFR 54.8(a)(4); see *Program Management Order*, *supra* note 4, 22 FCC Rcd at 16387, para. 32.

¹⁵ 47 CFR 54.8(a)(1), (d).

¹⁶ *Id.* § 54.8(e)(1).

¹⁷ *Id.* § 54.8(e)(4).

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.* § 54.8(f).

²⁰ *Id.* §§ 54.8(e)(5), (f).

²¹ “Causes for suspension and debarment are conviction of or civil judgment for attempt or commission of criminal fraud, theft, embezzlement, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, receiving stolen property, making false claims, obstruction of justice and other fraud or criminal offense arising out of activities associated with or related to the schools and libraries support mechanism, the high-cost support mechanism, the rural healthcare support mechanism, and the low-income support mechanism.” *Id.* § 54.8(c). Associated activities “include the receipt of funds or discounted services through [the federal universal service] support mechanisms, or consulting with, assisting, or advising applicants or service providers regarding [the federal universal service] support mechanisms.” *Id.* § 54.8(a)(1).

²² *Id.* § 54.8(b).

As with the suspension process, you may contest the proposed debarment or its scope by filing arguments and any relevant documentation within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of this letter or its publication in the **Federal Register**, whichever occurs first.²³ The Bureau, in the absence of extraordinary circumstances, will notify you of its decision to debar within ninety (90) calendar days of receiving any information it may have filed.²⁴ If the Bureau decides to debar the you, its decision will become effective upon either your receipt of a debarment notice or publication of the decision in the **Federal Register**, whichever occurs first.²⁵

If and when your debarment becomes effective, you will be prohibited from participating in activities associated with or related to all federal universal service support mechanisms, including the Lifeline program for at least three years from the date of debarment.²⁶ The Bureau may set a longer debarment period or extend an existing debarment period if necessary to protect the public interest.²⁷ Pursuant to the Commission's rules, should you choose to contest the scope or length of any such debarment, you must file arguments and any relevant documentation within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of notice or publication in the **Federal Register** of such debarment, whichever is earlier.²⁸

III. Non-Compliance

In the *2012 Lifeline Order*, the Commission implemented a compliance plan requirement for any carrier that is seeking to become an ETC without offering service, at least in part, over its own facilities.²⁹ In its Lifeline compliance plan, a carrier must describe and adhere to certain protections designed to protect consumers and the Universal Service Fund.³⁰ The Lifeline compliance plan must: (1) outline the measures the carrier will take to comply with program rules, including requirements related to enrollment,

²³ *Id.* § 54.8(e)(3).

²⁴ *Id.* § 54.8(e)(5).

²⁵ *Id.* The Commission may reverse a debarment, or may limit the scope or period of debarment, upon a finding of extraordinary circumstances, following the filing of a petition by you or an interested party or upon motion by the Commission. *Id.* § 54.8(f).

²⁶ *Id.* § 54.8(d), (g). We note that under the Plea Agreement Q Link shall not participate, directly or indirectly, in any program administered by the FCC as of the time of sentencing currently scheduled for January 15, 2025. Plea Agreement, *supra* note 1, at para. 8.

²⁷ 47 CFR 54.8(g).

²⁸ *Id.* § 54.8(e)(4).

²⁹ See 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(1)(a); see also *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization; Lifeline and Link Up; Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service; Advancing Broadband Availability Through Digital Literacy Training*, WC Docket Nos. 11–42, 03–109, 96–45, and 12–23, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 27 FCC Rcd 6656, 6813, para. 368 (2012) (*2012 Lifeline Order*) (establishing the Lifeline compliance plan requirement as a condition to receiving forbearance from the statute's requirement that ETCs offer service at least in part over their own facilities).

³⁰ *2012 Lifeline Order*, 27 FCC Rcd at 6816, para. 379.

submitting claims for reimbursement, materials related to certifications, and program integrity safeguards, and (2) provide a detailed description of how the carrier offers service, the geographic areas in which it offers service, and a description of the carrier's corporate structure and Lifeline service plan offerings.³¹ Q Link submitted a Lifeline compliance plan to receive forbearance from the statute's facilities requirement, and that Lifeline compliance plan was approved on August 8, 2012.³²

Following an investigation led by the Department of Justice, on October 14, 2024, Q Link pleaded guilty to conspiring to defraud and commit related offenses in connection with a scheme involving the Lifeline program which indicates Q Link has violated and is not in compliance with the terms of its compliance plan. The Commission is also aware [REDACTED]

Corporate operations related to the control of an ETC are material aspects of a Lifeline compliance plan.³³ As such, any change to the control of a non-facilities-based ETC without prior approval from the Wireline Competition Bureau is a violation of the Lifeline compliance plan requirement.³⁴

Please direct any response as follows:

If sent by messenger or hand delivery, or by commercial overnight mail (other than U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail, Priority Mail Express, and Priority Mail), the response must be sent to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, to the attention of *Christopher J. Sova*, Acting Chief, Investigations and Hearings Division, Enforcement Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, 9050 Junction Drive, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701. Hand-delivered or messenger-delivered paper filings for the Commission's Secretary are accepted between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. by the FCC's mailing contractor at 9050 Junction Drive, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701. All hand deliveries must be held together with rubber bands or fasteners. Any envelopes and boxes must be disposed of before entering the building.

If sent by First-Class Mail, Priority Mail Express, or Priority Mail, the response must be sent to *Christopher J. Sova*, Acting Chief, Investigations and Hearings Division, Enforcement Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, 45 L Street NE, Washington, DC 20554.

You must also transmit an electronic copy of the response and all Documents produced with the response via email to *IHDTelecom@fcc.gov*. The electronic copy shall be produced in a format that allows the Commission to access and use it, together

³¹ *Id.*

³² See *Wireline Competition Bureau Approves the Compliance Plans for Birch Communications, Boomerang Wireless, IM Telecom, Q Link Wireless, and TAG Mobile*, WC Docket Nos. 09–197 and 11–42, Public Notice, 27 FCC Rcd 9184 (WCB 2012).

³³ See *Wireline Competition Bureau Reminds Carriers of Eligible Telecommunications Carrier Designation and Compliance Plan Approval Requirements for Receipt of Federal Lifeline Universal Service Support*, WC Docket Nos. 09–197 and 11–42, Public Notice, 29 FCC Rcd 9144, 9145 (WCB 2014).

³⁴ See *id.*

with instructions and all other materials necessary to use or interpret the data, including record layouts, data dictionaries, and a description of the data's source. If you have any questions, please contact Christina Thomas at *Christina.Thomas@fcc.gov* or (202) 418–1879.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Sova
Acting Chief
Investigations and Hearings Division
Enforcement Bureau

cc: Fred Theobald, Universal Service
Administrative Company (via email)
Matthew Menchel, Esq., Kobre & Kim LLP
(via email)
Michael Sherwin, Esq., Kobre & Kim LLP (via
email)
Evelyn Sheehan, Esq., Kobre & Kim LLP (via
email)

[FR Doc. 2024–29140 Filed 12–11–24; 8:45 am]

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

[DA 24–1130; FR ID 264820]

Notice of Suspension and Commencement of Proposed Debarment Proceedings; Federal Lifeline Program

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Enforcement Bureau (Bureau) gives notice of the suspension of Q Link Wireless LLC (Q Link) from the federal Lifeline program (Lifeline Program) and all federal universal service support mechanisms. Additionally, the Bureau gives notice that debarment proceedings are commencing against Q Link. Q Link, or any person who has an existing contract with or intends to contract with Q Link to provide or receive services in matters arising out of activities associated with or related to the Lifeline Program, may respond by filing an opposition request, supported by documentation.

DATES: Opposition requests must be submitted within 30 days of receiving the suspension letter or by January 13, 2025, whichever comes first. The Bureau will decide on any opposition request within 90 days.

ADDRESSES: Federal Communications Commission, Enforcement Bureau, Investigations and Hearings Division, 45 L Street NE, Washington, DC 20554.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christina Thomas, Federal Communications Commission, Enforcement Bureau, Investigations and Hearings Division, 45 L Street NE, Washington, DC 20554. Christina