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# Inn owner accused of environmental rule violations



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ONEKAMA - The owner of the Portage Point Inn is being charged with violating a host of federal environmental laws.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers charges Michael DeVoe with 10 violations of the Clean Water and Rivers and Harbors acts, as well as 10 counts of non-compliance to permit conditions for work he authorized on Portage Lake.

"There were a number of incidents where the Inn placed structures, moved sand and conducted other activities without a permit," said Thomas Gezon, assistant U.S. attorney. "It definitely affects the ecosystem."

DeVoe said his actions had no ecological impact on the lake.

"It's a series of technicalities," he said, "but we hope to work it out with them."

Court records list a number of alleged violations discovered by the Corps of Engineers between the fall of 1999 and July 2001.

It charges DeVoe with constructing a number of unauthorized piers, jet ski hoists and boat hoists. At least two of these boat hoists were built after the corps sent a cease and desist letter and posted a stop work order, according to court records.

Other charges include the dumping of more than 250 cubic yards of beach sand into the lake on three

occasions. An area of boulders used to prevent beach erosion, called riprap, was covered with additional sand.

"Every case is different but the number of violations in this case is unusually large," Gezon said.

DeVoe said much of this work is normal operations at the 100-year-old resort hotel. He also said he used sand to cover the riprap to protect customers from a 5-foot drop that developed as lake levels fell.

"Why did it take them 95 years to show up on our beach and decide that we need to have permits?" he said. "But we're trying to work it out with the Corps of Engineers. We're not really interested in a fight."

The maximum penalty could be up to \$25,000 per day for each violation, though Gezon said the maximum penalty is for extreme cases where pollution is involved or public health is endangered.

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