

FAQ: Christendom College Wastewater Management and DEQ Compliance

Updated 9/15/2025

Has Christendom polluted the Shenandoah River?

No. Neither of the recent DEQ inspections found evidence that any partially treated wastewater sewage reached the Shenandoah River.

- **April 2024:** Solids were found in a stormwater ditch on Christendom's property, called an *unnamed tributary (UT)*. The ditch runs about 400 feet before reaching the river. The solids were contained within 80 feet of the ditch and did **not** reach the river.
- **October 2024:** DEQ observed solids within the same ditch, extending downstream but still within the 400-foot channel. An operator described using a hose to try to wash down material near the outfall of the Plant — not into the river itself. DEQ required the solids to be manually removed and disposed of which Christendom completed immediately.

In both cases, DEQ confirmed that the Shenandoah River itself was not impacted, and no further action was required after corrective steps were taken.

What is the current status with DEQ?

Christendom is working under a **Consent Order** with DEQ. This is a standard regulatory tool used to ensure facilities stay in compliance. The College is currently operating in compliance and continues to be fully cooperative with DEQ staff, providing timely information, access, and assistance as required.

What corrective actions have been taken?

- Solids were removed from the UT in October 2024.
- A **new 30K gal stand-alone clarifier** (equipment that separates/settles solids from treated water) was installed in **August 2025**. DEQ requires final certification of this project by **December 31, 2025**.
- Christendom has invested **over \$500,000** in plant improvements over the past 5 years.
- The wastewater system is monitored **daily** by a licensed third-party operator, Inboden Environmental Services.

What does the Consent Order require next?

- Payment of a civil charge (**\$16,916.38**).
- Quarterly reports to DEQ on plant operations (starting October 2025).
- A long-term plan, due by **December 2026**, that will evaluate options such as:
 - No additional upgrades following the completion of the Clarifier Project
 - Expanding treatment capacity.
 - Connecting to a municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant, where Christendom would convert its Plant into a pump station – similar to the project recently completed by the Lake Frederick community.

Why was Christendom fined if it is in compliance now?

The fine is related to **past exceedances**, such as high ammonia levels and solids found in the stormwater ditch in 2024, and some sporadic exceedances since the May 2024 Notice of Violation was issued.

Civil charges are a **normal enforcement tool** DEQ uses across wastewater facilities in Virginia. They hold facilities accountable for past issues, even if corrective actions have already been or are being taken.

Today, Christendom is **operating in compliance**, has invested over **\$500,000** in improvements, and continues working closely with DEQ to safeguard the community and the Shenandoah River.

How does Christendom view its responsibility?

As a Christian institution, Christendom views environmental stewardship not just as a regulatory requirement but as a moral duty — caring for our neighbors, protecting the Shenandoah Valley’s natural beauty, and safeguarding community health, as has been evidenced by the proactive and continuous improvements to its Plant over the last several decades.

*For more information, visit the **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**, which maintains all public records on this matter.*