

EPA Proposes Updated Vessel General Permit and Permit for Small Vessels

On December 7, 2011, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed to issue two draft vessel general permits that would regulate discharges from commercial vessels, excluding military and recreational vessels. The proposed permits would help protect the nation's waters from ship-borne pollutants and reduce the risk of introduction of invasive species from ballast water discharges.

The draft Vessel General Permit, which covers commercial vessels greater than 79 feet in length, would replace the current 2008 Vessel General Permit when it expires in December 2013. The new draft Small Vessel General Permit would cover vessels smaller than 79 feet in length and would provide such vessels with the Clean Water Act permit coverage they will be required to have as of December 2013.

Both permits will be subject to a 75-day public comment period, which will allow a broad array of stakeholders, including industry and communities, to provide feedback. That information will help inform EPA's decision on the final permits; expected to go into effect in 2013. EPA intends to issue the final permits in November 2012, a full year in advance, to allow vessel owners and operators time to prepare for new permit requirements.

For more information on the proposed permits, please visit: www.epa.gov/npdes/vessels.