



Final 2014 Small Vessel General Permit

On Sep. 10, 2014, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's final 2014 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) small vessel general permit (sVGP) was published in the Federal Register.

Summary

The sVGP applies to any owner and operator of a non-recreational, non-military vessel less than 79 feet in length that is operating in a capacity as a means of transportation. It will take effect on Dec. 19, 2014.

The permit provides a mechanism for EPA to regulate discharges incidental to the normal operation of the aforementioned vessels. It is organized by discharge management categories and includes common-sense requirements for general discharges, fuel management, engine and oil control, solid and liquid waste management, deck washdown and runoff and above water line hull cleaning, vessel hull maintenance, graywater, fish hold effluent, ballast water, and overboard cooling water discharges.

The sVGP is estimated to cost a commercial vessel operator between \$17 and \$133 per year.

Eligible vessels should obtain coverage under the sVGP beginning Dec. 19 by signing and dating the sVGP Permit Authorization and Record of Inspection (PARI) form and then retaining a copy of the signed form onboard the vessel.

The sVGP also requires the owner/operator to inspect the vessel quarterly, take any corrective actions necessary, and certify completion of the inspections on the PARI form annually.

Background

On March 30, 2005, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in *Northwest*

Environmental Advocates et al. v. EPA ruled that EPA's exclusion of discharges incidental to the normal operation of a vessel from NPDES permitting exceeded the Agency's authority under the Clean Water Act (CWA). On July 23, 2008, the Ninth Circuit Court upheld the decision. In response to this decision, EPA issued the vessel general permit (VGP) in late 2008 (and reissued in 2013) to provide a mechanism to regulate incidental discharges from vessels longer than 79 feet.

Also in 2008, Congress enacted Public Law (P.L.) 110-299 to provide a two-year permitting moratorium for commercial fishing vessels (regardless of size) and non-recreational vessels less than 79 feet in length. During the moratorium, EPA was to study the relevant discharges and submit a report to Congress. EPA completed the report, "Study of Discharges Incidental to Normal Operation of Commercial Fishing Vessels and Other Non-Recreational Vessels Less Than 79 Feet," in August 2010. (A copy can be viewed at <http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/npdes/vessels/Vessels-Background.cfm>.) Congress subsequently extended the moratorium until Dec. 18, 2014 through P.L. 111-215 and P.L. 112-213.

The permit goes into effect upon conclusion of the moratorium on Dec. 19, 2014.

For More Information

Visit:
<http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/npdes/vessels/Small-Vessel-General-Permit.cfm>. For questions about the sVGP, email VGP@epa.gov.