



Alaskan Seafood Processing Effluent Guidelines Notice of Data Availability

Summary

The purpose of this notice is to make available for public review and comment data and information gathered recently by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from seafood processing facilities in Alaska and other publicly available sources. These data relate to the applicability of and discharge requirements for the Alaskan seafood subcategories of the Canned and Preserved Seafood Processing effluent limitations guidelines (40 CFR Part 408).

This notice provides preliminary results of analyses of the data and information. It also provides preliminary indications of how these results may be reflected in EPA's final response to petitions submitted in 1980 by certain members of the Alaskan seafood processing industry, and in amended effluent limitations guidelines (ELGs) applicable to certain Alaskan seafood processing discharges which EPA is considering whether to promulgate in final form.

EPA will accept comments until January 6, 2014. It is important to take advantage of this opportunity to comment on this notice so that EPA hears from a broad range of stakeholders. EPA expects interested parties to comment now to inform Agency decision-making.

Background

In the 1970s, EPA issued ELGs establishing limits for seafood processing facilities in Alaska based on location. The ELGs were different for processors in non-remote and remote areas.

In "non-remote" locations, EPA based ELGs on a process that screens the solids from the waste stream. The only discharge is liquid wastewater.

In "remote" locations, EPA based the ELGs on grinding the processing solids to reduce their size. Once ground, the wastewater, containing the ground solids, is discharged to near shore waters.

In 1980, the Alaska seafood processing industry sent a petition to EPA asking it to reconsider the non-remote limits set in the ELGs. In response to the petition, EPA temporarily suspended the stricter limits for Anchorage, Cordova, Juneau, Ketchikan and Petersburg and instead allowed processors in those areas to use the limits for remote locations.

In 1981, EPA issued a proposed response and amendments to the ELGs denying most of the industry's petition and requesting comment on additional locations that may have similar characteristics to the non-remote locations. EPA also continued the suspension of the ELGs until a final response to the petition is issued. EPA has yet to take final action on its proposal.

In 2010, EPA began the process leading to a final decision on a response to the petition and amendments to the existing regulation. As a result, EPA recently gathered new data and information and performed supporting analyses to update the 1981 proposal.

Why is EPA Concerned About These Discharges Today?

Discharging seafood processing wastewater containing solids into near shore waters is an environmental and human health concern. Some impacts include:

- ◆ Degraded water quality
- ◆ Floating solids and scum
- ◆ Large piles of persistent waste on seafloor
- ◆ Gas eruptions from waste piles

-
- ◆ *Negative effects on tourism, local residents and recreation*
 - ◆ *Attraction of nuisance species*

How Will Today's Notice Affect Seafood Processing Discharges?

Today's notice does not impose or change any requirements. It simply provides new information and data and preliminary indications of how these results may be reflected in EPA's final response to the industry petitions and in amended ELGs applicable to certain Alaskan seafood processing discharges.

In particular, today's notice indicates that EPA may reinstate the originally promulgated ELGs for all non-remote locations based on screening. EPA is also soliciting comments on possibly extending the definition of non-remote to additional locations, including Dutch Harbor, Sitka, the Kenai Peninsula, and possibly others that have similar characteristics such as Naknek.

The newly collected data demonstrate that these technologies are feasible, available, and affordable in all of these locations. In addition, the data demonstrate that requirements based on screening will halt the formation and persistence of underwater piles of seafood waste that have occurred over the past 30 years and will have a positive long-term impact on the affected communities in these areas.

For More Information

You can view the Federal Register Notice at <http://water.epa.gov/scitech/wastetech/guide/seafood>. In addition, the notice and supporting documentation is available at <http://www.regulations.gov> under Docket ID: EPA-HQ-OW-2011-0999.

You may also contact Lindsay Guzzo at (206) 553-0268 or Guzzo.Lindsay@epa.gov or Donald Anderson at (202) 566-1021 or Anderson.Donaldf@epa.gov.
