



30th Alaska State Legislature

House Transportation Committee

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Sponsor Statement

HB 51- Small Vessel Wastewater Exemption

House Bill 51 would reinstate statutes that exempt the state ferries and other small passenger vessels from large cruise ship wastewater discharge requirements, instead allowing them to discharge wastewater under Best Management Practices (BMP) plans.

Alaska Statutes require commercial passenger vessels to have a permit from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to discharge wastewater into waters of the state. The effluent limits in the permit are to be based on levels of treatment that can be achieved using an advanced wastewater treatment system (AWTS).

An exemption in the statute was made for smaller ships – including the state ferries – in recognition of the problems they would have installing AWTS on board their smaller vessels. Alternative measures designed to protect Alaska waters and fish, primarily through the employment BMP plans and designation of no-discharge areas, were imposed on these vessels. The intent of the BMP plans is for the vessels to continually improve their wastewater performance. Sampling, monitoring and compliance assistance along with BMP review and approval has generated improved operation of these systems since the program's inception.

The exemption language in the statute expired on January 1, 2016 leaving the small vessels without a viable means to comply with the statutory permitting provisions. This bill would restore the statutory exemption along with DEC's authority to require the alternative requirements such as BMP for the smaller vessels.

Without the changes in the proposed bill, state ferries and small cruise ships would have to install AWTS technology, which would be cost and space prohibitive. Additionally, most small cruise ships and state ferries lack available space and weight capacity to install AWTS, creating potential stability issues. DOT&PF estimates the cost to retrofit ferries is over \$5 million.