



BALLAST WATER AND OTHER VESSEL DISCHARGES

Enact a Uniform National Standard for Ballast Water and Other Vessel Discharges

The commercial maritime industry is struggling under a burdensome regulatory framework that undermines the efficiency of waterborne commerce vital to our national economy. In 2008, the Environmental Protection Agency promulgated the Vessel General Permit (VGP), which regulated ballast water and other vessel discharges under the Clean Water Act's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program. EPA's action was the result of a court decision extending the NPDES program, designed for fixed, land-based facilities, to discharges from vessels in interstate commerce. The program allows states to add their own requirements to the VGP, and more than 20 have done so, creating a confusing patchwork of state-by-state requirements that undermines the safe, efficient flow of waterborne commerce.

AWO urges Congress to enact a uniform national standard for vessel discharges that ensures high standards of environmental protection without undermining the safe and efficient flow of economically critical maritime commerce. AWO is working with the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to draft a bill that would establish such a national standard, and remove vessel discharges from the NPDES program, preempt the establishment of a state-by-state patchwork of vessel discharge measures, and require EPA to consult with the Coast Guard to establish effective standards for the control of vessel discharges, including ballast water.

The Coast Guard also has the authority to regulate ballast water under the National Invasive Species Act. In 2009, the Coast Guard released a proposed regulation that would require virtually all vessels travelling in U.S. waters to install ballast water treatment systems without preempting state regulation. AWO has urged the Coast Guard play a lead role in encouraging the Obama Administration to support a uniform national framework for vessel discharges, and to require ballast water treatment systems only after a practicability review ensures that they are necessary, available, safe and effective on any given class of vessels.

For more information on this issue, or to take action in support of uniform standards for vessel discharges, contact Ms. Jennifer Carpenter or Mr. Chris Coakley at (703) 841-9300, extensions 260 or 297, respectively, or via email at jcarpenter@vesselalliance.com or ccoakley@vesselalliance.com.