



**ELI SUMMER SCHOOL
JUNE 25TH
THE CLEAN WATER ACT**

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BACKGROUND/HISTORY OF CWA

- **1899 Rivers and Harbors Act** established permit requirements to prevent unauthorized obstruction or alteration of any navigable water of the United States.
- **The 1948 Federal Water Pollution Control Act (FWPCA)** was the first major U.S. law to address water pollution.
 - Authorized the Surgeon General, along with other Federal, state and local entities, to prepare comprehensive programs to eliminate or reduce the pollution of interstate waters and tributaries and to improve the sanitary condition of surface and underground waters.



BACKGROUND/HISTORY OF CWA (CONT'D)

- **1965 Water Quality Act**
 - Focused on both navigation and protecting human health
 - Created the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration
 - Focused on developing water quality standards across the nation
 - Implementation issues
- **President Nixon's 1970 Reorganization Plans No.s 3 & 4** created EPA and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- **1970 Refuse Act Permit Program**
 - Focused on water quality protection
 - US Army Corps of Engineers, EPA and the states each had a role in the program
 - Struck down by *Kalur v. Resor, Civ. Action No.1331-71*, 335 F. Supp. 1 (US District Ct, December 21, 1971)

The 1972 FWPCA Amendments

- Established the basic structure for regulating pollutant discharges into the waters of the United States
- Section 402 made it unlawful for any person to discharge any pollutant from a point source into waters of the United States without a permit [*National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)*]
- Maintained existing requirements for states to set water quality standards for all contaminants in surface waters

1977 Clean Water Act

- Clarified that federal facilities are subject to regulation by authorized state NPDES programs
- Added a list of 129 toxic pollutants, applicable to 21 industry categories in Section 307(a)
- Established Pretreatment program delegation
 - Authorized EPA to approve local pretreatment programs
 - Required authorized NPDES states to modify programs to include pretreatment oversight

1987 Water Quality Act

- Authorized continuation of the Chesapeake Bay Program, and the establishment of a Chesapeake Bay Program Office.
- Authorized establishment of a Great Lakes National Program Office within EPA and a Great Lakes Research Office within NOAA
- Established stormwater permitting requirements [Section 402(p)]
- Indian tribes may be considered as “States”
- Required States to adopt numeric criteria for toxic pollutants listed under Section 307(a) of the Clean Water Act for which section 304(a) criteria have been published, if the presence of these pollutants is likely to affect a water body's use. [Section 303(c)(2)(B)]

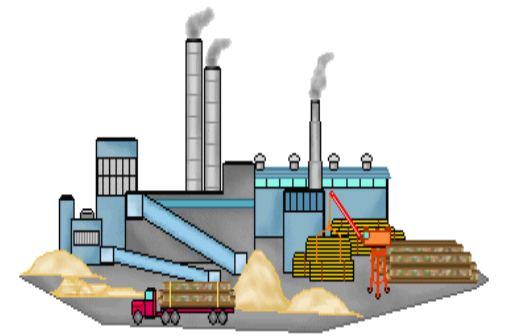
TECHNOLOGY BASED STANDARDS



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- Authorized under sections 301, 304, 306 and 307
- Effluent guidelines are designed to address specific industrial categories.
- To date, EPA has promulgated effluent guidelines that address 56 categories—ranging from manufacturing industries such as petroleum refining to service industries such as centralized waste treatment.
- These regulations apply to between 35,000 and 45,000 facilities that discharge directly to the Nation's waters, as well as another 12,000 facilities that discharge into wastewater treatment plants or publicly owned treatment works (POTWs).

National Effluent Guidelines (ELGs)



- Specify the maximum allowable levels of pollutants that may be discharged by facilities within an industrial category or subcategory.
- Limits are based on the performance of specific technologies but do not generally require the industry to use these technologies, but rather allow the industry to use any effective alternatives to meet the numerical pollutant limits.
- Generally, each facility within an industrial category or subcategory must comply with the applicable discharge limits — regardless of its location within the country or on a particular water body.
- EPA conducts an assessment of:
 - (1) the performance of the best pollution control technologies or pollution prevention practices that are available for an industrial category or subcategory as a whole; and
 - (2) the economic achievability of that technology.

National ELGs apply to three types of facilities within an industrial category:

- Existing facilities that discharge directly to surface waters (*direct discharges*) are governed by best practicable technology (BPT), best available technology (BAT), or best conventional pollutant control technology (BCT);
- Existing facilities that discharge to POTWs (*indirect dischargers*) are governed by pretreatment standards for existing sources (PSES); and
- Newly constructed facilities (*new sources*) that discharge to surface waters either directly or indirectly are governed by new source performance standards (NSPS) and pretreatment standards for new sources (PSNS).



WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

- Established by Section 303(c) of the CWA
- States, tribes and territories must establish standards that protect public health or welfare, enhance the quality of water and serve the purposes of the Act
- States, tribes and territories must review their standards at least every three years
- Establishes EPA's review and approval process for water quality standards
 - *EPA publishes recommended criteria and guidance under CWA Sec. 304(a)*
 - *EPA can promulgate standards for states when the states don't have appropriate water quality standards in place*

Water Quality Standards Components

A water quality standard consists of **four basic elements**:

1. **Designated Uses** of the water body (e.g., recreation, water supply, aquatic life, agriculture),
2. **Water Quality Criteria** to protect designated uses (numeric pollutant concentrations and narrative requirements),
3. **An Antidegradation Policy** to maintain and protect existing uses and high quality waters, and
4. **General Policies** addressing implementation issues (e.g., low flows, variances, mixing zones). [*At State's discretion*]

Designated Uses



- Are identified by considering the use and value of the water body for public water supply, for protection of fish, shellfish, and wildlife, and for recreational, agricultural, industrial, and navigational purposes.
- In setting uses, States, tribes and territories examine the suitability of a water body for the uses based on the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the water body, its geographical setting and scenic qualities, and economic considerations.
- Designated uses must include the "fishable/swimmable" goal uses identified in section 101(a)(2) of the CWA. If a designated use does not include these goal uses, a use attainability analysis (UAA) would have to be conducted.



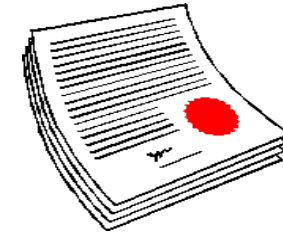
Water Quality Criteria

- States, tribes and territories must adopt water quality criteria with sufficient coverage of parameters and of adequate stringency to protect designated uses.
- In adopting criteria, they may:
 - adopt the criteria that EPA publishes under §304(a) of the Clean Water Act;
 - modify the §304(a) criteria to reflect site-specific conditions; or
 - adopt criteria based on other scientifically-defensible methods.

Water Quality Criteria (cont'd)

- States, tribes and territories typically adopt both numeric and narrative criteria.
 - **Numeric criteria are** quantitative, and address specific concentrations of pollutants or the toxic effects of a mixture of pollutants or the health of a waterbody.
 - **Narrative criteria** are qualitative statements that articulate the water quality goals for a waterbody. May take the form of "free from" statements, e.g.,
These waters shall be free from floating, suspended and settleable solids in concentrations and combinations that would impair any use assigned to this Class, that would cause aesthetically objectionable conditions, or that would impair the benthic biota or degrade the chemical composition of the bottom.

CWA Section 402: NPDES Permits Program



- Section 402 prohibits the discharge of pollutants by point sources into waters of the United States without an NPDES Permit.
- NPDES permit limits, terms and conditions must ensure the protection of water quality in the receiving waterbody.
- States, tribes and territories can be authorized to administer their own NPDES programs. CWA Section 402 (c)(3) provides that approved programs can be withdrawn.
- In most cases, the NPDES permit program is administered by authorized states and territories. EPA provides oversight for these authorized states.

What is a Point Source?

CWA Section 502(14)



- Any discernible, confined, and discrete conveyance, including but not limited to:
 - any pipe, ditch, channel, tunnel, conduit, well, discrete fissure, container, rolling stock, concentrated animal feeding operation, landfill leachate collection system, vessel or other floating craft from which pollutants are or may be discharged
- ***Does not include return flows from irrigated agriculture or agricultural storm water runoff***

What is a Pollutant?

CWA Section 502(6)

- Dredged spoil, solid waste, incinerator residue, filter backwash, sewage, garbage, sewage sludge, munitions, chemical wastes, biological materials, radioactive materials, heat, wrecked or discarded equipment, rock, sand, cellar dirt, and industrial, municipal, and agricultural waste discharged into water
- ***Does not include sewage from vessels or injected wastes***



CWA Section 404

- A permit is required before dredged or fill material may be discharged into waters of the United States, unless the activity is exempt from Section 404 regulation.
- Activities in waters of the United States regulated under this program include fill for development, water resource projects (such as dams and levees), infrastructure development (such as highways and airports) and mining projects.



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CWA Section 404 (*Cont'd*)

- No discharge of dredged or fill material may be permitted if:
 - (1) a practicable alternative exists that is less damaging to the aquatic environment, or
 - (2) the nation's waters would be significantly degraded.
- Proposed activities are regulated through a permit review process.
- States can be authorized to administer the 404 program.
 - *Only two states have been approved to run the 404 program: Michigan and New Jersey.*

404 Permits

- ***An individual permit*** is required for potentially significant impacts. Individual permits are reviewed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which evaluates applications under a public interest review, as well as the environmental criteria set forth in the CWA Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines, regulations promulgated by EPA.
- For discharges that will have only minimal adverse effects, a general permit may be suitable
- ***General permits*** are issued on a nationwide, regional, or State basis for particular categories of activities.
- The general permit process eliminates individual review and allows certain activities to proceed with little or no delay, provided that the general or specific conditions for the general permit are met.
 - For example, minor road activities, utility line backfill, and bedding are activities that can be considered for a general permit.

Waters of the United States

- Both CWA 402 and 404 programs regulate discharges into waters of the United States
- Waters of the United States is defined in 40 C.F.R. 122.2.

Includes:

- All waters which are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide;
- All interstate waters, including interstate wetlands;
- The territorial sea

Waters of the United States Does **NOT** Include

- ***Waste treatment systems***, including treatment ponds or lagoons designed to meet the requirements of CWA are not waters of the United States.



Waters of the United States Does **NOT** Include

- **Ground water**, including ground water drained through subsurface drainage systems
- Discharges affecting ground water might be regulated as NPDES discharges if there is a direct hydrological connection to surface water
- Ground water might be considered “water of the state”



Supreme Court Cases: Impact on Definition

- The most recent Supreme Court cases have led to confusion about which waters are protected under the CWA
 - *SWANCC v. U.S. Army COE* (2001)
 - *Rapanos v. United States* (2006)
- As a result, EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers promulgated the final Clean Water Rule: Definition of “Waters of the United States” on May 26, 2015, to clarify the definition.



May 26, 2015, Final Rule

- Defines “waters of the United States”
- Specifies waters that are **not** waters of the United States, even where they otherwise meet certain terms in the definition
- Defines specific terms (e.g., tributary, significant nexus) that are used in analyses to determine whether a water body is a water of the United States
- <http://www2.epa.gov/cleanwaterrule/clean-water-rule-documents-related-clean-water-rule>

CWA Section 311



- Established the ***Oil Pollution Prevention Program*** in 1973
- Sets forth requirements for prevention of, preparedness for, and response to oil discharges at specific non-transportation-related facilities
- Goal is to prevent oil from reaching navigable waters and adjoining shorelines, and to contain discharges of oil
- Requires regulated facilities to develop and implement Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plans and establishes procedures, methods, and equipment requirements

Oil Pollution Act of 1990

- Amended the CWA, and provided new requirements for contingency planning by government and industry under the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan.
- Increased the penalties and other consequences of a discharge of oil into waters.
 - *Civil judicial penalties of up to \$25,000 per day of violation or \$1,000 per barrel or unit discharged, or in the event of gross negligence or willfulness, \$3,000 per barrel or unit. With inflation adjustments, the current amounts are \$32,500 per day, or \$1,100 per barrel or unit; \$4,300 per barrel in the event of gross negligence or willfulness.*
- Required some oil storage facilities to prepare Facility Response Plans. On July 1, 1994, EPA finalized regulations directing facility owners or operators to prepare and submit these plans for responding to a worst-case discharge of oil.

CWA LIABILITY AND PENALTIES



- The CWA is a strict liability statute; there is no requirement to prove intent or causation.
- Under CWA Section 309 EPA can issue administrative orders against violators, and seek civil or criminal penalties.
- States that are authorized by EPA to administer the NPDES program must have authority to enforce permit requirements under their respective state laws.
- *Administrative Penalties: Up to \$10,000 per day for each violation*
- *Civil Judicial Penalties: Up to \$37,500 per day for each violation*

CWA Section 309(c): Criminal Penalties

- For negligence, the minimum fine for a first time offence is \$2,500, with a maximum of \$25,000 fine per day of violation and a violator may receive up to a year in jail or both. If a violation occurs after a person's first conviction, a maximum fine of \$50,000 per day may be issued.
- For a knowing endangerment violation, a penalty of up to \$250,000 may be issued and/or an individual may receive up to 15 years in prison. An organization would face up to \$1,000,000 in penalties.

Public Participation



- The CWA provides for public participation in the permit issuance process
 - Provides for notice and comment, and the opportunity to request a hearing during permit issuance process
 - Authorizes judicial review of certain *federal actions*, including NPDES permit issuance or denial, under Section 509
- Allows for citizen suits under Section 505, which provides:
Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section and section 309(g)(6), any citizen can commence a civil action on his own behalf...

QUESTIONS

