



## Final Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Coastal Subcategory of the Oil and Gas Extraction Point Source Category

### Summary

*This regulation limits the discharge of pollutants into waters of the United States and the introduction of pollutants into publicly-owned treatment works by existing and new facilities in the coastal subcategory of the oil and gas extraction point source category. The final rule requires most coastal oil and gas operations to refrain from any discharge of pollutants into environmentally sensitive coastal waters. The major waste streams being limited are produced water, drilling fluids, and drill cuttings.*

### Environmental and Human Health Concerns

Coastal waters are typically highly sensitive to pollutant discharges compared to open offshore areas. Many of the pollutants that are discharged by producing wells and production facilities are toxic to aquatic life or humans or are known to cause cancer. The impacts of these pollutants on aquatic life include acute toxicity, chronic toxicity, adverse effects on reproductive functions, physical destruction of spawning and feeding habitats, and loss of prey organisms. Many of these pollutants are persistent in the environment, are resistant to biodegradation, and accumulate in sediments and aquatic organisms. These coastal oil and gas operations also discharge a high volume of conventional pollutants such as solids.

### Environmental Benefits

This rule provides increased protection to the sensitive ecosystems of coastal waters along the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska by limiting discharges of pollutants from more than 9,300 producing wells and production facilities into these waters. It reinforces current zero discharge requirements for

producing wells and production facilities in coastal Florida, California, and Alabama.

The final rule will benefit the environment by removing toxic pollutants from water discharges that have adverse effects on human health and aquatic life. These limitations are expected to reduce discharges of toxic pollutants by more than two hundred thousand pounds per year, conventional pollutants by 2.8 million pounds per year, and nonconventional pollutants by approximately 1.5 billion pounds per year.

### Effluent Limitations Guidelines

Effluent limitations guidelines are national regulations that establish restrictions on the discharge of pollutants to surface waters or to publicly owned treatment works by specific categories of industries. The requirements are developed by EPA based upon the application of specific process or treatment technologies to control pollutant discharges. Although the guidelines are developed based upon particular technologies, EPA does not require that dischargers use these technologies. Individual facilities may meet the requirements using whatever

combination of treatment technologies and process changes they choose. Since guidelines were first issued in 1974, EPA has promulgated limitations and standards for 51 industrial categories.

### **Guidelines for Coastal Oil and Gas**

This rule establishes effluent limitations guidelines for direct dischargers at the following levels of controls:

- Best practicable control technology currently available (BPT)
- Best conventional pollutant control technology (BCT)
- Best available technology economically achievable (BAT)

The regulation also establishes "new source performance standards" (NSPS) for direct dischargers and "pretreatment standards for existing and new sources" (PSES and PSNS, respectively) discharging to publicly owned treatment works.

Under the final rule, oil and gas extraction facilities in coastal locations will be required to achieve zero discharge for produced water; treatment, workover, and completion fluids; drilling fluids; drill cuttings; and dewatering effluent, except in Cook Inlet, Alaska (see discussion below). The final rule also prohibits the discharge of produced water from offshore facilities into coastal waters.

### **Cook Inlet Limitations**

Physical attributes of the oil and gas extraction activities in Cook Inlet, Alaska render zero discharge of produced water; treatment, workover, and completion fluids; drilling fluids; drill cuttings; and dewatering effluent technically or economically unachievable. This regulation requires facilities in Cook Inlet to meet the same discharge limitations as those required for offshore oil and gas facilities on free oil, diesel oil, mercury, cadmium, and toxicity

for drilling wastes. It also establishes limitations on oil and grease for produced water and prohibits the discharge of produced sand; these requirements are also the same as currently required for offshore facilities.

### **Cost to Implement**

EPA estimates that the total annual costs of the final rule are \$16.2 million, which EPA has determined to be economically achievable. When EPA analyzed the potential impact of the rule on small facilities, EPA found that most small facilities are already in compliance or are already covered by permit requirements equivalent to the rule's discharge limitations. Thus, the rule will not have any adverse economic impact on them.

### **Additional Information**

For additional information concerning this rule, contact Mr. Charles E. White, Office of Water, Engineering and Analysis Division (4303), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC, 20460, (202) 260-5411.

To view the complete text of the Federal Register notice on the Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/EPA-WATER>. This notice gives complete information on how to obtain additional information and how to review the complete public record for this rulemaking, including EPA's responses to comments received during the rulemaking.