

Date of Public Notice: May 9, 2012

Statewide

**PUBLIC NOTICE
ISSUANCE OF DRAFT 401 CERTIFICATIONS FOR
U.S. EPA'S VESSEL GENERAL NPDES PERMITS
AND PUBLIC HEARING**

Notice is hereby given that on May 9, 2012, the Director of the Environmental Protection Agency issued two draft 401 Certifications for the U.S. EPA's Vessel General NPDES permits. "Draft Actions" are written statements of the Director's intent with respect to the issuance, denial, etc. of a permit, license, order, etc. Interested persons may submit written comments regarding draft actions.

The U.S. EPA has issued draft general NPDES permits for discharges from the operation of vessels. The permits would cover vessels nationwide, and covers and regulates a wide variety of discharges from vessels, including ballast water, bilge water and gray water discharged from vessels. Sanitary wastewater discharges are exempt from the Clean Water Act, but are covered by U.S. Coast Guard regulations.

All federal actions that could affect water quality in a state must obtain a certification from the state that the action meets state water quality standards. The issue affecting Ohio waters is the ballast water discharge and whether that discharge meets Ohio Water Quality Standards. Ballast water is water and associated suspended sediments taken into or discharged from ballast tanks to maintain the stability of the vessel.

Because the certifications authorize new vessel discharges, the discharges from the vessels covered by the draft certifications, if approved, would result in degradation to, or lowering of, the water quality of various bodies of water throughout the State of Ohio. However, the chemical-specific water quality criteria developed to protect aquatic life and human health, set forth in OAC 3745-1, will not be exceeded.

An Ohio EPA public hearing on the draft certifications has been scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on June 25, 2012 at Huron Public Library, 333 Williams Street, Huron, Ohio 44839. The public hearing will end when everyone in attendance has had an opportunity to provide testimony related to the project.

In accordance with OAC 3745-1-05, Ohio EPA will provide an opportunity for public comment concerning this project. Comments received shall be considered by the Director before the draft action is issued as final. Persons wishing to be on Ohio EPA's interested parties mailing list for this project or submit comments for Ohio EPA's consideration must do so in writing to Ohio EPA-DSW, Permits Processing Unit, P.O. Box 1049, Columbus, Ohio 43126-1049 by the close of the public hearing on June 25, 2012.

Copies of the draft certifications and technical support information may be reviewed and/or copies made at Ohio EPA's Central Office, by first calling 614-644-2001 to make an appointment.