



Fish News

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Congress Passes Bill to Delay EPA Fishing Boat Pollution Rules

Last night, (July 29, 2010), the U.S. House and Senate passed a bill (S. 3372) to extend the current moratorium on the NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit requirements for all commercial and charter fishing vessels, regardless of size, and for other commercial vessels (e.g. tugs, barges and water taxis) under 79 feet. The bill is currently on its way to President Obama's desk, awaiting his signature.

The legislation was sponsored by U.S. Senators Lisa Murkowski (R - Alaska) and Barbara Boxer (D - California), plus 15 co-sponsors in



The bill, containing the latest moratorium extension, is on its way to the President's desk for his signature.

the Senate and a large number of supporters in the House. It provides a three-year extension of the moratorium on permits for discharges under the Clean Water Act. The previous two-year moratorium was scheduled to expire Saturday, July 31, 2010. The latest moratorium will expire on Dec. 18, 2013.

The extension would continue the exceptions for discharges (gray water, bilge water, ballast water and deck runoff) incidental to the normal operation of vessels until an extensive analysis of the requirements is completed by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Coast Guard. Having the extension in place is critical for commercial fishermen. Without it, all fishing boats would be required to get permits. The cost to apply for a permit would be prohibitive and would most likely devastate many small fishing fleets in Alaska.



“In Alaska, the 9,700 vessels that make up the commercial and charter fishing fleets would be adversely affected if the moratorium expired,” said Sen. Lisa Murkowski in a press release earlier this month. “It will take the EPA a significant amount of time to analyze the study and determine if these discharges need to be regulated.”

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