



---

# Fish News

Nov. 10, 2014

---

## **Vessel Discharge Permit Exemption for Fishing Vessels Expires December 19<sup>th</sup>**

*By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director*

Unless Congress can act quickly, all fishing vessels will be required to comply with strict new regulations as of December 19, 2014. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Small Vessel General Permit (SVGP) for owners and operators of non-military, non-recreational, commercial vessels less than 79 feet in length.

A legislative moratorium in place, including an exemption to incidental discharge permits for fishing vessels and other vessels under 79 feet in length, will expire December 18<sup>th</sup> without congressional action. The EPA is set to implement the regulations on December 19<sup>th</sup> requiring all non-recreational, non-military vessels to carry the vessel discharge permit.

The Aleutians East Borough is urging coastal communities and fishermen to contact members of Congress to request action now to either extend the current moratorium on the vessel discharge permits or to make the exemption for fishing vessels permanent.

Earlier this year, the U.S. House passed the Coast Guard Reauthorization Bill (HR 4005), which contains a provision making the NPDES exemption permanent for commercial fishing vessels.

In April, the Aleutians East Borough signed on to a letter along with 112 other entities, urging members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation to approve the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (S. 2094), which includes a permanent exemption from the permit for fishing vessels, including fish processing vessels and fish tender vessels, and commercial vessels less than 79 feet. The Committee approved S. 2094 in July.

On November 6<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Stanley Mack sent a letter to the Alaska Delegation requesting congressional action before the Dec 19th deadline. The Borough Assembly will also consider a resolution at their November 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, urging swift action on the vessel discharge permits.

In the event Congress is not able to enact legislation in time to address this issue, fishermen need to be prepared to comply with the new EPA NPDES vessel discharge permits. The small vessel discharge permit is on the agenda for discussion at the upcoming [AEB Fishermen's meeting](#) November 19<sup>th</sup>, to be broadcast on KSDP/[www.apradio.org](http://www.apradio.org). In addition, Rick Marks of the law office of Robertson, Monagle & Eastaugh, has prepared a step-by-step document, found here: <http://www.aebfish.org/vgpcomply110614.pdf>, for use by Aleutians East fishermen to comply with the Vessel Discharge Permit regulations. These discharge permits will be required by the EPA on all commercial fishing vessels regardless of size, all USCG-inspected charter boats, and all commercial-use vessels under 79 feet starting December 19, 2014.

Here is the link for more information about the Small Vessel General Permit from the EPA: <http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/npdes/vessels/Small-Vessel-General-Permit.cfm>.

---

*You are reading FISH NEWS, published quarterly by the Aleutians East Borough to help keep the lines of communication open among Alaska's commercial fishing interests. If you would like to have FISH NEWS delivered to you via e-mail subscription, send an e-mail message to [ltanis@aeboro.org](mailto:ltanis@aeboro.org). For more information about our fisheries, our people, and our communities, please visit us at [www.aleutianseast.org](http://www.aleutianseast.org), [www.aebfish.org](http://www.aebfish.org) and check out our blog at <http://aebfishblog.blogspot.com/>. Find us on Facebook:*

<http://www.facebook.com/AleutiansEastBorough>

