



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Issues First Discharge Permit for Cruise Ships in Alaska
Action a major step in implementing Citizens' Cruise Ship Initiative

JUNEAU, ALASKA—The State of Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today issued the first ever general permit for wastewater discharges from large cruise ships operating in Alaska's waters.

"We are pleased to issue this permit because it's a major step toward fulfilling the Citizens' Cruise Ship Initiative," said DEC Commissioner Larry Hartig. "This permit will help ensure that discharges from cruise ships comply with Alaska's Water Quality Standards."

The new permit, along with the first full season of onboard Ocean Rangers this summer, and a vessel tracking system will fulfill DEC's major responsibilities in implementing the Cruise Ship Initiative passed by Alaskan voters in August 2006.

The majority of large cruise ships operating in Alaska have advanced wastewater treatment systems that produce a very high quality discharge – much higher, for example, than shore-based municipal sewage treatment systems. Even so, cruise ship discharges are expected to have trouble meeting water quality standards for four parameters -- ammonia, copper, nickel and zinc. Recognizing that the cruise lines will need time to make changes to their operations or equipment, the General Permit includes a compliance schedule that gives the cruise lines until the 2010 season to fully comply with the new standards for these four substances. All other limits take effect immediately and DEC expects cruise ships will be able to meet those limits with existing treatment systems.

To qualify for a compliance schedule, permittees will have to meet interim effluent limits, conduct additional sampling and testing of their discharges, and submit a plan for how they will come into compliance no later than 2010. The department has determined that as long as ships comply with the interim effluent limits there will be no impacts on water resources or aquatic life.

“Alaska’s (Cruise Ship) program has no peers—there’s nothing like it anywhere,” said DEC Cruise Ship Program Manager Denise Koch. “We’ve had to build it from the ground up which has been challenging. The bottom line is we have developed a program that implements the intent and letter of the Citizens’ Cruise Ship Initiative. With cruise ships operating under a general permit, with ocean rangers onboard those ships, and with the help of a vessel tracking system, we will protect Alaska’s waters.”

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To view the general permit, general permit information sheet, and Notice of Intent and Discharge Monitoring Report visit: www.dec.state.ak.us/water/cruise_ships/gp/08gp.html

For more information about DEC’s Cruise Ship Program, go to DEC’s website at: www.dec.state.ak.us/water/cruise_ships/index.htm