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## **Alaska Water Permit Program Approved**

October 31, 2008, Anchorage, Alaska - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today approved the State of Alaska's application to take over permitting authority for wastewater discharges under the Clean Water Act.

Wastewater discharge permits are issued to municipal sewage treatment plants, seafood processors, and to industrial facilities such as mines and certain oil and gas facilities. Until now, permits in Alaska were issued by the federal EPA. With this approval, Alaska joins 45 other states that run their own state permitting programs. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) will issue and enforce the permits. EPA will assume an oversight role.

"When Alaska became a state almost 50 years ago, it was with the promise that we would be self-sufficient, particularly when it comes to managing our natural resources," Governor Palin said. "Taking responsibility for the quality of our water resources is yet another step toward fulfilling that promise. Alaskans are the best stewards of Alaska's resources. I have full confidence in the Department of Environmental Conservation and our other agencies and know that our water resources are in the best possible hands."

"Our permits and efforts to protect water quality will be worthy of our tremendous water resources and their unique value to Alaskans," said Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Larry Hartig. "We are particularly looking forward to making the permit program work for our rural residents who often have great interest and much to contribute when it comes to protecting water quality. Their voices must be heard. We also appreciate EPA's efforts in helping us reach this important goal, along with the support of the state legislature, the public work group that helped us, and the many, many Alaskans who have contributed."

The EPA approval triggers a three-year transition from federal to state control of the program. During the transition period, responsibility for developing and enforcing different types of permits is handed off from EPA to DEC. The transition will be complete by November 2011.

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For more information, go to: <http://www.dec.state.ak.us/water/npdes/index.htm>