



Focus on: Cruise Ship Discharges

from Ecology's Water Quality Program, Northwest Regional Office

Draft -- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Ecology welcomes your comments on the *draft* MOU from March 22 through April 6, 2004.

Please visit the Ecology website at www.ecy.wa.gov to view documents and for more information about the MOU and cruise ship discharges.

Technical questions and written comments:

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Comments can also be emailed to the NWRO Water Quality program:
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Documents available for review:

- www.ecy.wa.gov
- Ecology's Northwest Regional Office –Central Records (see address above (Call 425-649-7190 for an appointment))

Ecology, cruise ship industry and Port of Seattle reach agreement

The health of Washington's marine waters would gain important new protection under a proposed agreement affecting cruise ships that operate in the state. The agreement follows discussions among the Department of Ecology (Ecology), the U.S. Coast Guard, the Port of Seattle, the Northwest Cruise Ship Association (NWCA), and member lines that call at the Port of Seattle: the Holland-America, Norwegian, and Princess lines.

These discussions have resulted in a *draft* Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines the way wastewater discharges from these large vessels will be managed. The cruise lines, as signers of the MOU, agree that their vessels will operate under performance standards that exceed the requirements of Washington State and federal laws that currently govern waste discharges from ships.

The MOU maximizes environmental protection as the cruise ship industry undergoes growth that contributes to the state's economic health. The agreement will be implemented prior to the 2004 cruise season.

Ecology is interested in your comments on this draft MOU document. You can help by letting us know what you think. Information about what the memorandum covers and how it will work is available on the Internet at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/wastewater/index.html. An email response form is also available at that Web site.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Ecology staff identified in the sidebar at left.

The Port of Seattle's representatives can also be contacted to answer questions about this voluntary initiative, via a link at Ecology's Web site.

More Details About the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

Ecology Water Quality Program staff visited three of the member cruise lines' ships to gather information about their wastewater treatment systems and other waste management issues. (A separate MOU on air quality is being developed in coordination with the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency.)

An important factor in the development of this MOU is the goal of having an agreement in place for the upcoming cruise season. In doing so, Ecology will join other states with maritime cruise ship activities operating under MOUs, such as Hawaii and Florida. Alaska and California have specific state legislation governing cruise ship industry operations.

The federal Clean Water Act limits Washington State's regulatory power to control wastewater discharges from Marine Sanitation Devices. However, as a voluntary and binding agreement, the MOU sets more rigorous restrictions on wastewater discharges. This is because the MOU states that, while in Washington waters, the signatory cruise lines will voluntarily discharge only waste water that is treated with Advanced Wastewater Treatment Systems (AWTS); even then, discharges are allowed only under specific conditions. Such AWTS systems exceed current federal wastewater treatment standards that otherwise would apply to cruise ships in Washington waters.

Key elements of the MOU:

- Identifies applicable waters (including Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the boundary with Canada).
- Cruise lines must notify Ecology prior to the arrival of ships using an AWTS, and provide detailed information about the systems on each ship.
- Prohibits the discharge of untreated black water and gray water, conventionally-treated effluent, and residual solids (sludge) in Washington waters. These may be discharged only more than 12 miles from shore, and not within the defined "Area To Be Avoided" of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.
- Allows continuous AWTS discharges in Washington waters at speeds of six knots or more and one nautical mile or more from berth at the Port of Seattle with certain restrictions and allows AWTS discharges at the Port with more stringent provisions.
- Specifies a sampling regime, testing and reporting requirements; including industry reports provided to Alaska under state and federal law.
- Identifies specific elements of an AWTS system and its operation; including ultra-violet light polishing and storage capacity.
- Specifies that NWCA ships will comply with Washington's more restrictive hazardous waste laws and stipulates that garbage may not be discharged in state waters.
- Authorizes Ecology staff to inspect ships and specifies the inspection protocol.
- Provides for a post-season review and report by Ecology.

We welcome your interest and participation!

If you need this information in an alternate format, please contact the Water Quality Program at 425-649-7041. If you are a person with a speech or hearing impairment, call 711, or 800-833-6388 for TTY.