

EPA Proposes Reissuance of NPDES General Permit (GMG290000) for the Western Portion of the Gulf of Mexico



Mike Chernekoff



Boyd Bryan



Chris Martin

On December 12, 2006, the Environmental Protection Agency's Regional Administrator for Region 6 proposed a reissuance of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general permit No. GMG290000. This general permit regulates discharges for existing and New Source facilities in the Offshore Subcategory of the Oil and Gas Extraction Point Source Category located in and discharging to the Outer Continental Shelf offshore of Louisiana and Texas. The proposed permit will replace the permit previously reissued October 7, 2004 and published in the Federal Register at 69 FR 60150. The permit generally regulates and authorizes discharges from oil and gas exploration, development, production, and transmission facilities located in and discharging to federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico seaward of the outer boundary of the territorial seas off Louisiana and Texas.

The proposed draft permit retains the discharge limitations and conditions provided by the expiring permit. The proposed permit also imposes new requirements that permittees comply with cooling water intake structure regulations and perform sub-lethal effects measurements for whole effluent toxicity testing.

In addition, the draft permit allows new test methods for monitoring cadmium and mercury in stock barite. Finally, clarifications have been added to the permit requirements for: types of activities covered under the permit; pit cleaning and other wash water; end of well monitoring; sediment toxicity test averaging; the drilling fluids discharge rate limitation; discharges associated with dual gradient drilling; toxicity testing for miscellaneous discharges; and calculation of the produced water critical dilution for toxicity testing.

Ultimately, the only changes included in the proposed reissued permit that result in more onerous requirements on permittees relate to the new requirements for cooling water intake structure regulations and additional monitoring for sub-lethal effects for whole effluent toxicity testing. Otherwise, the additions included in the proposed draft permit only clarify policies and practices provided by the present general permit.

The complete proposed permit, Fact Sheet and a copy of the Federal Register notice may be obtained at www.epa.gov/earth1r6/6wq/6wq.htm. Comments to the proposed reissued general permit (GMG290000) must be received by February 20, 2007 and may be sent to Ms. Diane Smith at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6, 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733 or by e-mail to smith.diane@epa.gov.

For more information, please contact [Mike Chernekoff](#), [Boyd Bryan](#) or [Chris Martin](#).