

Must: Flow Through Devices

Thousands of boat owners in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska would be required to install "flow through" devices to prevent the discharge of raw sewage into coastal and interstate waters where they sail, according to new regulations proposed last week by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The regulations, if adopted, would allow no discharge at all from vessels operating in landlocked freshwater lakes, reservoirs, other freshwater impoundments, and rivers not capable of being used for interstate travel by vessels equipped with marine toilets.

The "no discharge" provisions of the regulations would apply to all new vessels on January 30, 1977 and to existing vessels three years later. An existing vessel, for purpose of complying with the regulations, is one on which construction began before January 30, 1976.

For vessels operating in coastal or interstate waters, certified flow through treatment devices would be required for discharged wastes to meet rigorous EPA treatment standards.

As of January 31, 1980, treated discharges must meet a standard of a maximum of 200 fecal coliform bacteria per 100 milliliters and 150 milligrams of suspended solids per liter.

However, if a boat owner elects to install a flow through device by January 30, 1978 he will be exempt from meeting the 1980 standard. Instead, discharges from his certified flow through treatment device must meet a less restrictive standard of 1,000 fecal

coliform bacteria per 100 milliliters and no visible floating solids.

A similar exemption also applies to vessels presently equipped with certified treatment device. Both exemptions apply for as long as the installed treatment equipment remains operable.

Generally, interstate and coastal waters include estuaries, freshwater lakes accessible through locks, and other waters navigable interstate by toilet-equipped vessels.

EPA's proposed regulations were issued pursuant to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, and --according to the statute--are to be enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The proposed regulations would apply to more than 600,000 U.S. and foreign vessels operating on American waters. EPA estimates that the regulations would cover about 550,000 recreational boats, 54,000 small commercial vessels, 6,000 tow and tug boats, 1,480 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers vessels, 710 Navy ships and about 700 ocean-going commercial ships.

The proposed regulations were published last Friday (October 10), in the Federal Register. Persons wishing to comment on the proposals may submit written comments by November 24 to EPA's Office of Water and Hazardous Material (WH-551), Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street S.W. Washington, D.C. 20460.