

§ 122.28 General permits (applicable to State NPDES programs, see § 123.25).

(a) *Coverage.* The Director may issue a general permit in accordance with the following:

(1) *Area.* The general permit shall be written to cover one or more categories or subcategories of discharges or sludge use or disposal practices or facilities described in the permit under paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section, except those covered by individual permits, within a geographic area. The area should correspond to existing geographic or political boundaries such as:

- (i) Designated planning areas under sections 208 and 303 of CWA;
- (ii) Sewer districts or sewer authorities;
- (iii) City, county, or State political boundaries;
- (iv) State highway systems;
- (v) Standard metropolitan statistical areas as defined by the Office of Management and Budget;
- (vi) Urbanized areas as designated by the Bureau of the Census according to criteria in 30 FR 15202 (May 1, 1974); or
- (vii) Any other appropriate division or combination of boundaries.

(2) *Sources.* The general permit may be written to regulate one or more categories or subcategories of discharges or sludge use or disposal practices or facilities, within the area described in paragraph (a)(1) of this section, where the sources within a covered subcategory of discharges are either:

(i) Storm water point sources; or (ii) One or more categories or subcategories of point sources other than storm water point sources, or one or more categories or subcategories of "treatment works treating domestic sewage", if the sources or "treatment works treating domestic sewage" within each category or subcategory all:

- (A) Involve the same or substantially similar types of operations;
- (B) Discharge the same types of wastes or engage in the same types of sludge use or disposal practices;
- (C) Require the same effluent limitations, operating conditions, or standards for sewage sludge use or disposal;
- (D) Require the same or similar monitoring; and (E) In the opinion of the Director, are more appropriately con-

trolled under a general permit than under individual permits.

(3) *Water quality-based limits.* Where sources within a specific category or subcategory of dischargers are subject to water quality-based limits imposed pursuant to §122.44, the sources in that specific category or subcategory shall be subject to the same water quality-based effluent limitations.

(4) *Other requirements.* (i) The general permit must clearly identify the applicable conditions for each category or subcategory of dischargers or treatment works treating domestic sewage covered by the permit.

(ii) The general permit may exclude specified sources or areas from coverage.

(b) *Administration—(1) In general.* General permits may be issued, modified, revoked and reissued, or terminated in accordance with applicable requirements of part 124 of this chapter or corresponding State regulations. Special procedures for issuance are found at §123.44 of this chapter for States.

(2) *Authorization to discharge, or authorization to engage in sludge use and disposal practices.* (i) Except as provided in paragraphs (b)(2)(v) and (vi) of this section, dischargers (or treatment works treating domestic sewage) seeking coverage under a general permit shall submit to the Director a notice of intent to be covered by the general permit. A discharger (or treatment works treating domestic sewage) who fails to submit a notice of intent in accordance with the terms of the permit is not authorized to discharge, (or in the case of sludge disposal permit, to engage in a sludge use or disposal practice), under the terms of the general permit unless the general permit, in accordance with paragraph (b)(2)(v), contains a provision that a notice of intent is not required or the Director notifies a discharger (or treatment works treating domestic sewage) that it is covered by a general permit in accordance with paragraph (b)(2)(vi). A complete and timely, notice of intent (NOI), to be covered in accordance with general permit requirements, fulfills the requirements for permit applications for purposes of §§122.6, 122.21, and 122.26. As of December 21, 2025 or an EPA-approved alternative date (see 40 CFR

127.24(e) or (f)), all notices of intent submitted in compliance with this section must be submitted electronically by the discharger (or treatment works treating domestic sewage) to the Director or initial recipient, as defined in 40 CFR 127.2(b), in compliance with this section and 40 CFR part 3 (including, in all cases, subpart D to part 3), §122.22, and 40 CFR part 127. 40 CFR part 127 is not intended to undo existing requirements for electronic reporting. Prior to this date, and independent of 40 CFR part 127, discharger (or treatment works treating domestic sewage) may be required to report electronically if specified by a particular permit or if required to do so by state law.

(ii) The contents of the notice of intent shall be specified in the general permit and shall require the submission of information necessary for adequate program implementation, including at a minimum, the legal name and address of the owner or operator, the facility name and address, type of facility or discharges, the receiving stream(s), and other required data elements as identified in appendix A to part 127. General permits for stormwater discharges associated with industrial activity from inactive mining, inactive oil and gas operations, or inactive landfills occurring on Federal lands where an operator cannot be identified may contain alternative notice of intent requirements. All notices of intent shall be signed in accordance with §122.22. Notices of intent for coverage under a general permit for concentrated animal feeding operations must include the information specified in §122.21(i)(1), including a topographic map.

(iii) General permits shall specify the deadlines for submitting notices of intent to be covered and the date(s) when a discharger is authorized to discharge under the permit;

(iv) General permits shall specify whether a discharger (or treatment works treating domestic sewage) that has submitted a complete and timely notice of intent to be covered in accordance with the general permit and that is eligible for coverage under the permit, is authorized to discharge, (or in the case of a sludge disposal permit, to engage in a sludge use or disposal

practice), in accordance with the permit either upon receipt of the notice of intent by the Director, after a waiting period specified in the general permit, on a date specified in the general permit, or upon receipt of notification of inclusion by the Director. Coverage may be terminated or revoked in accordance with paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

(v) Discharges other than discharges from publicly owned treatment works, combined sewer overflows, municipal separate storm sewer systems, primary industrial facilities, and storm water discharges associated with industrial activity, may, at the discretion of the Director, be authorized to discharge under a general permit without submitting a notice of intent where the Director finds that a notice of intent requirement would be inappropriate. In making such a finding, the Director shall consider: the type of discharge; the expected nature of the discharge; the potential for toxic and conventional pollutants in the discharges; the expected volume of the discharges; other means of identifying discharges covered by the permit; and the estimated number of discharges to be covered by the permit. The Director shall provide in the public notice of the general permit the reasons for not requiring a notice of intent.

(vi) The Director may notify a discharger (or treatment works treating domestic sewage) that it is covered by a general permit, even if the discharger (or treatment works treating domestic sewage) has not submitted a notice of intent to be covered. A discharger (or treatment works treating domestic sewage) so notified may request an individual permit under paragraph (b)(3)(iii) of this section.

(vii) A CAFO owner or operator may be authorized to discharge under a general permit only in accordance with the process described in §122.23(h).

(3) *Requiring an individual permit.* (i) The Director may require any discharger authorized by a general permit to apply for and obtain an individual NPDES permit. Any interested person may petition the Director to take action under this paragraph. Cases where an individual NPDES permit may be required include the following:

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(A) The discharger or “treatment works treating domestic sewage” is not in compliance with the conditions of the general NPDES permit;

(B) A change has occurred in the availability of demonstrated technology or practices for the control or abatement of pollutants applicable to the point source or treatment works treating domestic sewage;

(C) Effluent limitation guidelines are promulgated for point sources covered by the general NPDES permit;

(D) A Water Quality Management plan containing requirements applicable to such point sources is approved;

(E) Circumstances have changed since the time of the request to be covered so that the discharger is no longer appropriately controlled under the general permit, or either a temporary or permanent reduction or elimination of the authorized discharge is necessary;

(F) Standards for sewage sludge use or disposal have been promulgated for the sludge use and disposal practice covered by the general NPDES permit; or

(G) The discharge(s) is a significant contributor of pollutants. In making this determination, the Director may consider the following factors:

(1) The location of the discharge with respect to waters of the United States;

(2) The size of the discharge;

(3) The quantity and nature of the pollutants discharged to waters of the United States; and

(4) Other relevant factors;

(ii) *For EPA issued general permits only*, the Regional Administrator may require any owner or operator authorized by a general permit to apply for an individual NPDES permit as provided in paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section, only if the owner or operator has been notified in writing that a permit application is required. This notice shall include a brief statement of the reasons for this decision, an application form, a statement setting a time for the owner or operator to file the application, and a statement that on the effective date of the individual NPDES permit the general permit as it applies to the individual permittee shall automatically terminate. The Director may grant additional time upon request of the applicant.

(iii) Any owner or operator authorized by a general permit may request to be excluded from the coverage of the general permit by applying for an individual permit. The owner or operator shall submit an application under § 122.21, with reasons supporting the request, to the Director no later than 90 days after the publication by EPA of the general permit in the FEDERAL REGISTER or the publication by a State in accordance with applicable State law. The request shall be processed under part 124 or applicable State procedures. The request shall be granted by issuing of any individual permit if the reasons cited by the owner or operator are adequate to support the request.

(iv) When an individual NPDES permit is issued to an owner or operator otherwise subject to a general NPDES permit, the applicability of the general permit to the individual NPDES permittee is automatically terminated on the effective date of the individual permit.

(v) A source excluded from a general permit solely because it already has an individual permit may request that the individual permit be revoked, and that it be covered by the general permit. Upon revocation of the individual permit, the general permit shall apply to the source.

(c) *Offshore oil and gas facilities* (Not applicable to State programs). (1) The Regional Administrator shall, except as provided below, issue general permits covering discharges from offshore oil and gas exploration and production facilities within the Region’s jurisdiction. Where the offshore area includes areas, such as areas of biological concern, for which separate permit conditions are required, the Regional Administrator may issue separate general permits, individual permits, or both. The reason for separate general permits or individual permits shall be set forth in the appropriate fact sheets or statements of basis. Any statement of basis or fact sheet for a draft permit shall include the Regional Administrator’s tentative determination as to whether the permit applies to “new

sources,” “new dischargers,” or existing sources and the reasons for this determination, and the Regional Administrator’s proposals as to areas of biological concern subject either to separate individual or general permits. For Federally leased lands, the general permit area should generally be no less extensive than the lease sale area defined by the Department of the Interior.

(2) Any interested person, including any prospective permittee, may petition the Regional Administrator to issue a general permit. Unless the Regional Administrator determines under paragraph (c)(1) of this section that no general permit is appropriate, he shall promptly provide a project decision schedule covering the issuance of the general permit or permits for any lease sale area for which the Department of the Interior has published a draft environmental impact statement. The project decision schedule shall meet the requirements of §124.3(g), and shall include a schedule providing for the issuance of the final general permit or permits not later than the date of the final notice of sale projected by the Department of the Interior or six months after the date of the request, whichever is later. The Regional Administrator may, at his discretion, issue a project decision schedule for offshore oil and gas facilities in the territorial seas.

(3) Nothing in this paragraph (c) shall affect the authority of the Regional Administrator to require an individual permit under §122.28(b)(3)(i) (A) through (G).

(d) *Small municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s)* (Applicable to State programs). For general permits issued under paragraph (b) of this section for small MS4s, the Director must establish the terms and conditions necessary to meet the requirements of §122.34 using one of the two permitting approaches in paragraph (d)(1) or (2) of this section. The Director must indicate in the permit or fact sheet which approach is being used.

(1) *Comprehensive general permit.* The Director includes all required permit terms and conditions in the general permit; or

(2) *Two-step general permit.* The Director includes required permit terms and conditions in the general permit appli-

cable to all eligible small MS4s and, during the process of authorizing small MS4s to discharge, establishes additional terms and conditions not included in the general permit to satisfy one or more of the permit requirements in §122.34 for individual small MS4 operators.

(i) The general permit must require that any small MS4 operator seeking authorization to discharge under the general permit submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) consistent with §122.33(b)(1)(ii).

(ii) The Director must review the NOI submitted by the small MS4 operator to determine whether the information in the NOI is complete and to establish the additional terms and conditions necessary to meet the requirements of §122.34. The Director may require the small MS4 operator to submit additional information. If the Director makes a preliminary decision to authorize the small MS4 operator to discharge under the general permit, the Director must give the public notice of and opportunity to comment and request a public hearing on its proposed authorization and the NOI, the proposed additional terms and conditions, and the basis for these additional requirements. The public notice, the process for submitting public comments and hearing requests, and the hearing process if a request for a hearing is granted, must follow the procedures applicable to draft permits set forth in §§124.10 through 124.13 (excluding §124.10(c)(2)). The Director must respond to significant comments received during the comment period as provided in §124.17.

(iii) Upon authorization for the MS4 to discharge under the general permit, the final additional terms and conditions applicable to the MS4 operator become effective. The Director must notify the permittee and inform the public of the decision to authorize the MS4 to discharge under the general permit and of the final additional

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terms and conditions specific to the MS4.

(Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 *et seq.*), Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300f *et seq.*), Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*), Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. 6901 *et seq.*)

[48 FR 14153, Apr. 1, 1983, as amended at 48 FR 39619, Sept. 1, 1983; 49 FR 38048, Sept. 26, 1984; 50 FR 6940, Feb. 19, 1985; 54 FR 18782, May 2, 1989; 55 FR 48072, Nov. 16, 1990; 57 FR 11412, 11413, Apr. 2, 1992; 64 FR 68841, Dec. 8, 1999; 65 FR 30908, May 15, 2000; 68 FR 7268, Feb. 12, 2003; 73 FR 70483, Nov. 20, 2008; 80 FR 64096, Oct. 22, 2015; 81 FR 89348, Dec. 9, 2016; 85 FR 69196, Nov. 2, 2020]

§ 122.29 New sources and new dischargers.

(a) *Definitions.* (1) *New source* and *new discharger* are defined in §122.2. [See Note 2.]

(2) *Source* means any building, structure, facility, or installation from which there is or may be a discharge of pollutants.

(3) *Existing source* means any source which is not a new source or a new discharger.

(4) *Site* is defined in §122.2;

(5) *Facilities or equipment* means buildings, structures, process or production equipment or machinery which form a permanent part of the new source and which will be used in its operation, if these facilities or equipment are of such value as to represent a substantial commitment to construct. It excludes facilities or equipment used in connection with feasibility, engineering, and design studies regarding the source or water pollution treatment for the source.

(b) *Criteria for new source determination.* (1) Except as otherwise provided in an applicable new source performance standard, a source is a “new source” if it meets the definition of “new source” in §122.2, and

(i) It is constructed at a site at which no other source is located; or

(ii) It totally replaces the process or production equipment that causes the discharge of pollutants at an existing source; or

(iii) Its processes are substantially independent of an existing source at the same site. In determining whether these processes are substantially independent, the Director shall consider

such factors as the extent to which the new facility is integrated with the existing plant; and the extent to which the new facility is engaged in the same general type of activity as the existing source.

(2) A source meeting the requirements of paragraphs (b)(1) (i), (ii), or (iii) of this section is a new source only if a new source performance standard is independently applicable to it. If there is no such independently applicable standard, the source is a new discharger. See §122.2.

(3) Construction on a site at which an existing source is located results in a modification subject to §122.62 rather than a new source (or a new discharger) if the construction does not create a new building, structure, facility, or installation meeting the criteria of paragraph (b)(1) (ii) or (iii) of this section but otherwise alters, replaces, or adds to existing process or production equipment.

(4) Construction of a new source as defined under §122.2 has commenced if the owner or operator has:

(i) Begun, or caused to begin as part of a continuous on-site construction program:

(A) Any placement, assembly, or installation of facilities or equipment; or

(B) Significant site preparation work including clearing, excavation or removal of existing buildings, structures, or facilities which is necessary for the placement, assembly, or installation of new source facilities or equipment; or

(ii) Entered into a binding contractual obligation for the purchase of facilities or equipment which are intended to be used in its operation with a reasonable time. Options to purchase or contracts which can be terminated or modified without substantial loss, and contracts for feasibility engineering, and design studies do not constitute a contractual obligation under the paragraph.

(c) *Requirement for an environmental impact statement.* (1) The issuance of an NPDES permit to new source:

(i) By EPA may be a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 33 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.* and is subject to the