

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# THE CLEAN WATER ACT (CWA)

## The cornerstone of water quality protection in the U.S.

The CWA employs **regulatory & nonregulatory** tools

- to restore & maintain the chemical, physical, & biological integrity of the nation's waters
- to support protection & propagation of fish, shellfish, wildlife & recreation in & on the water

### CWA regulatory & nonregulatory tools are used to:

- reduce direct pollutant discharges to waterways
- finance municipal wastewater treatment facilities
- manage polluted runoff

### SOME CWA REGULATORY TOOLS:

#### (CWA §402) NATIONAL POLLUTION DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM (NPDES) PERMIT PROGRAM

- **Regulates point source** discharges of **pollutants** into waters of the U.S. via an NPDES permit
- NPDES permits set discharge limits, monitoring & reporting requirements, & special conditions

#### Some Point Source Discharges

**“Point Source”**: Any discernible, confined, & discrete conveyance from which pollutants are/may be discharged (any pipe, ditch, channel, tunnel, conduit, well, discrete fissure, container, rolling stock, concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO), landfill leachate collection system, vessel or floating craft). Excludes return flows from irrigated agriculture or agricultural stormwater runoff.

Pipe discharging treated wastewater



Regulated by EPA's traditional NPDES permits

Construction site



Regulated by EPA's NPDES Stormwater General Permit for Construction

Illegal disposal to a storm drain



Regulated by EPA's NPDES Stormwater General Permit for Industry

**“Pollutant”**: Dredged spoil, solid waste, incinerator residue, filter backwash, sewage, garbage, sewage sludge, munitions, chemical wastes, biological materials, certain radioactive materials, heat, wrecked or discarded equipment, rock, sand, cellar dirt, and industrial, municipal, and agricultural waste discharged into water.

#### (CWA §401) CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

- **Regulates** discharges of any federally licensed or permitted facility or activity which may result in discharge into waters of the U.S
- Ensures facility or activity is operated/conducted so that effluent limitations or other water quality requirements will not be violated

#### (CWA §404) PERMITS FOR DREDGE OR FILL MATERIAL

- **Regulates** discharge of dredged & fill material into waters of the U.S.
- Ensures discharge will not impair water flow, reach, biological & chemical conditions
- Ensures adverse impact on the aquatic environment is avoided, minimized, compensated for

### SOME CWA NONREGULATORY TOOLS

that provide assistance to establish & implement programs:

- **(CWA §106) water pollution control**
  - ▶ Monitoring, analysis & reporting of data, pollution control activities, training & outreach
- **(CWA §319) Nonpoint Source (NPS)\* control**
  - ▶ Identifying NPS pollution problems, implementing & evaluating measures that reduce/eliminate NPS pollution, training & outreach

\* **“Nonpoint Source (NPS) Pollution”**: comes from diffuse sources and is caused by rainfall, snowmelt, or irrigation that runs over land or through the ground, picks up pollutants, and deposits them into rivers, lakes, oceans, or groundwater.