

Effluent Guidelines Program Plan 15

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released [Effluent Guidelines Program Plan 15](#) (Plan 15), which describes analyses, studies, and rulemakings related to effluent limitations guidelines and pretreatment standards (ELGs).

What Does this Mean for Our Waters?

The Effluent Guidelines Program Plan is EPA's vehicle to share with the public our annual review of industry discharges to waterways and is part of the agency's activities focused on ensuring that the waters are safe for drinking, recreation, and wildlife. The plan, published every two years, identifies specific categories of industries requiring either additional study or rulemaking to limit pollutant discharges. The results of these studies and rulemakings will better equip EPA to prevent harmful pollutants from being released to rivers, estuaries, bays, and other waterbodies of the United States.

What are Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards?

ELGs are national, technology-based regulations developed to control industrial wastewater discharges to surface waters and into publicly owned treatment works (POTWs). ELGs are intended to represent the greatest pollutant reductions that are economically achievable for an industry. Clean Water Act section 304(m) requires EPA to biennially publish a plan for new and revised ELGs, after public review and comment.

What's in EPA's ELG Program Plan 15?

EPA published and requested public comments on Preliminary Effluent Guidelines Program Plan 15 (Preliminary Plan 15) on September 14, 2021. Plan 15 provides a summary of the comments received on Preliminary Plan 15 as well as updates on EPA's reviews of industrial wastewater discharges and treatment technologies.

Plan 15 presents the findings from the examination of a variety of industries to determine the range of pollutants they discharge as part of EPA's 2021 annual review of existing ELGs. In addition to the 2021 annual review, EPA is also presenting the results from its preliminary category review of the Plastics Molding and Forming (40 CFR part 463), Leather Tanning (40 CFR part 425), and Paint Formulating (40 CFR part 446) Categories. Plan 15 announces that after collecting and analyzing data (described in the Plan) on PFAS found in landfill leachate, EPA has determined that revisions to the ELGs for the Landfills Category (40 CFR part 445) are warranted. Further, EPA intends to expand the detailed study of the Textile Mills Category (40 CFR part 410) to gather information on the use and treatment of PFAS in this industry and associated PFAS discharges. For this expanded study, EPA intends to use a mandatory

questionnaire issued to a nationally representative sample of textile mills. Importantly, Plan 15 announces EPA's intent to initiate a POTW Influent Study of PFAS, which will focus on collecting nationwide data on industrial discharges of PFAS to POTWs, including categories recently reviewed. EPA intends to undertake this study to verify sources of PFAS wastewater and help POTWs assess the need for control measures at the source. In addition, Plan 15 announces that EPA is not pursuing further action for the Electrical and Electronic Components (E&EC) Category (40 CFR part 469) at this time but will continue monitoring this category for PFAS discharge data through the POTW Influent Study. EPA will also continue to monitor PFAS use and discharges from the Pulp, Paper, and Paperboard Category (40 CFR part 430) and airports.

Plan 15 also announces EPA's intent to undertake a detailed study of the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) Category (40 CFR part 412), which will focus on collecting information to enable EPA to make an informed, reasoned decision whether to undertake rulemaking to revise the ELGs for CAFOs. Conducting a detailed study is the best, and appropriate course of action to enable EPA to make an informed, reasoned decision on whether to undertake rulemaking to revise the ELGs for CAFOs.

Finally, Plan 15 provides updates related to several actions that are included in EPA's Regulatory Agenda, including the:

- Steam Electric Power Generating Category rulemaking to strengthen certain wastewater pollution discharge limitations for coal-fired power plants that use steam to generate electricity;
- Meat and Poultry Products Category to address nutrient discharges;
- Organic Chemicals, Plastics & Synthetic Fibers Category to address PFAS discharges; and
- Metal Finishing and Electroplating Categories to address PFAS discharges.

The agency intends to undertake the actions outlined in this Plan and summarized above. Commencement and pace of these activities are dependent on EPA's Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations and operating plan.

Where can I find more information?

Contact Doruntinë Rexhepi at (202) 566-2532 or rexhepi.doruntine@epa.gov. To access the ELG Plan 15, Federal Register notice, and supporting documents, visit EPA's Effluent Guidelines Program website at <https://www.epa.gov/eg/effluent-guidelines-plan>.