

Preliminary Effluent Guidelines Program Plan 15

EPA has released Preliminary Effluent Guidelines Program Plan 15 (Preliminary Plan 15), which describes analyses, studies, and rulemakings related to effluent limitations guidelines and pretreatment standards (ELGs). ELGs are national, technology-based regulations developed to control industrial wastewater discharges to surface waters and into publicly owned treatment works. 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. Members of the public may submit comments on the contents of Preliminary Plan 15 for 30 days following publication in the Federal Register.



Preliminary Plan 15 announces the status of EPA's efforts since the publication of ELG Program Plan 14:

First, EPA is announcing a rulemaking to revise the ELGs for the Organic Chemicals, Plastics, and Synthetic Fibers (OCPSF) category to address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) discharges from facilities manufacturing PFAS. Using available sampling data, EPA verified that PFAS, including legacy long-chain PFAS and short-chain replacement PFAS, are present in wastewater discharges from OCPSF facilities.

Second, EPA plans to conduct rulemaking to revise the Metal Finishing ELGs to address PFAS discharges from chromium electroplating facilities. EPA found that the use of PFAS-based mist/fume suppressants at these facilities results in wastewater containing PFAS. Data indicate that PFAS, including both legacy long-chain PFAS and short-chain replacement PFAS, are present in wastewater discharges from these facilities. Additionally, EPA identified several chromium electroplating facilities that have effectively reduced effluent concentrations of PFAS using granular activated carbon treatment.

Third, EPA has completed its detailed study of the Meat and Poultry Products point source category and is announcing a rulemaking to revise the ELGs last updated in 2004. This category includes facilities that slaughter, further process meat and poultry, or perform rendering operations. The data indicate that this industry discharges the highest phosphorus levels and second highest nitrogen levels of all industrial categories, causes treatment problems at publicly owned treatment works receiving wastewater discharges, and that the existing ELG's only apply to a small portion of the operating facilities nationwide.

Fourth, EPA will conduct detailed studies on PFAS in wastewater discharges from landfills as well as textile and carpet manufacturers. EPA identified landfill leachate as a source of PFAS to the environment resulting from disposal of products that contain PFAS. EPA identified textile and carpet manufacturing wastewater as a source of PFAS to the environment resulting from the use of PFAS chemicals in manufacturing at these facilities.

Fifth, EPA intends to publish a proposed Steam Electric Power Generating ELG supplemental rule in the fall of 2022, following a July 26, 2021 announcement that EPA is initiating a rulemaking process to strengthen certain discharge limits for certain wastewater streams from coal power plants that use steam to generate electricity.

Finally, Preliminary Plan 15 provides updates on ongoing point source category studies of the Electrical and Electronic Components category and the Multi-Industry PFAS study, and indicates that EPA does not intend to take further action on oil and gas extraction wastewater management at this time. Preliminary Plan 15 also provides initial results from EPA's review of the following existing point source categories: Metal Products and Machinery, Explosives Manufacturing, Canned and Preserved Seafood, Sugar Processing, Soap and Detergent Manufacturing, and Landfills.

EPA solicits comments on the entirety of Preliminary Plan 15. EPA is particularly interested in comments on the new cross-category wastewater pollutant concentration rankings analysis, the status of the preliminary reviews of high-ranking categories, the capabilities of membranes for industrial wastewater treatment technology, and the status of the PFAS multi-industry study. Additionally, the public is encouraged to provide suggestions for how best to include environmental justice (for overburdened and underserved communities) in ELG planning analyses.

Preliminary Effluent Guidelines Program Plan 15 and related information are available at [epa.gov/eg/preliminary-effluent-guidelines-program-plan](https://www.epa.gov/eg/preliminary-effluent-guidelines-program-plan).