



**DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL  
RESOURCES**

**Aquatic Resources  
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December 6, 2023

Mr. Eric Daiber  
Washington State Department of Ecology  
PO Box 47696  
Olympia, WA 98504-7696

Subject: DRAFT National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and State Waste Discharge General Permit for Discharges Associated with Vessel Deconstruction Activity Comments

Dear Mr. Eric Daiber:

Please accept the following comments from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on the DRAFT Vessel Deconstruction General Permit (VDGP) 2024 issued by the Department of Ecology.

The Washington State Legislature has found that derelict and abandoned vessels are public nuisances and safety hazards that pose hazards to navigation, detract from the aesthetics of Washington's waterways, and threaten the environment with the potential release of hazardous materials (RCW 79.100.010). DNR's Derelict Vessel Removal Program (DVRP) is the state's key mechanism for addressing the problem of derelict or abandoned vessels in Washington's waters. The DVRP has developed processes to remove vessels efficiently and cost-effectively from the environment in order to minimize pollution, habitat degradation, and threats to human health and safety.

Timely removal of abandoned and derelict vessels in the aquatic environment is crucial for preventing unnecessary pollution and managing the cost of sinking vessels. Required action timelines within the DRAFT VDGP could include up to 90 days before issuance (S2.1-Permit Administration) of the Permit. During this time, DVRP is responsible for maintaining the vessel in the least environmentally impactful manner, which can be very costly. This timeline significantly increases the costs associated with the removal of derelict vessels and becomes a burden on public entities and the taxpaying public. In addition, the permit fee itself is up to \$21,860. The money going to fees could cover the removal of multiple additional vessels.



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DNR would like to discuss the opportunity for a VDGP programmatic permit that could be held for an extended period by DNR and can be implemented in scenarios where the VDGP would be triggered. Allowing DVRP to maintain an ongoing programmatic permit would reduce the amount of time for vessel removal in these situations and the frequency that program money is spent on permit fees rather than vessel removal. In this scenario, instead of the Permit being held to a location, it would be a “mobile” permit that would be issued to an entity. DVRP has 15-day public notification period for vessel acquisition that could be tied with local public notice of VDGP activation for a specific area and timeframe. This would significantly reduce the time and cost required to move forward with vessel removal. Removing vessels from water in a timely fashion is critical for human and environmental health and safety.

Contents of the programmatic VDGP could contain a list of all applicable best management practices (BMPs) for minimal vessel deconstruction and application of the BMPs in the appropriate scenarios according to feasibility and receiving water body. Sensitive water areas would have the most protective BMPs and stormwater treatment implemented as identified in the developed Deconstruction and Site management Plan as described in S9.

Please consider an emergency avenue with reduced timeframes to obtain the VDGP in situations where a derelict vessel could be a causing human health, safety and environmental concerns.

Sincerely,

*Abby Barnes*

Abby Barnes  
Sediment Quality Unit Supervisor

cc: Troy Wood, DVRP Unit Supervisor