

State of Florida
Title XXIX
Chapter 403
Public Health
Environmental Control

403.0885 Establishment of federally approved state National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program.--

(1) The Legislature finds and declares that it is in the public interest to promote effective and efficient regulation of the discharge of pollutants into waters of the state and eliminate duplication of permitting programs by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under s. 402 of the Clean Water Act, Pub. L. No. 92-500, as amended, 33 U.S.C. ss. 1251 et seq., and the department under this chapter. It is further found that state implementation of the federal NPDES program, with sufficient time for legislative revision prior to the implementation of the state NPDES permit program by the department, would promote the orderly establishment of a state-administered NPDES program. It is the specific intent of the Legislature that permit fees charged by the department for processing of federally approved NPDES permits be adequate to cover the entire cost to the department of program management, for reviewing and acting upon any permit application, and to cover the cost of surveillance and other field services of any permits issued pursuant to this section.

(2) The department is empowered to establish a state NPDES program in accordance with s. 402 of the Clean Water Act, as amended. The department shall have the power and authority to assume the NPDES permitting program from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and to implement the program, including the general permitting program under 40 C.F.R. s. 122.28 and the pretreatment program under 40 C.F.R. part 403, in accordance with s. 402(b) of the Clean Water Act, as amended, and 40 C.F.R. part 123. Variance, thermal variance, and provisions for relief from criteria set forth in the Clean Water Act, as amended, and corresponding United States Environmental Protection Agency regulations shall be part of the assumed NPDES permitting program. The department may not accept authorization to administer a state NPDES program for municipal stormwater for a period of 4 years following federal approval of the state NPDES program. The provisions governing upset and bypass conditions contained in 40 C.F.R. s. 122.41 shall apply to the state National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Program. The state NPDES permit shall be the sole permit issued by the state under this chapter regulating the discharge of pollutants or wastes into surface waters within the state for discharges covered by the United States Environmental Protection Agency approved state NPDES program. This legislative authority is intended to be sufficient to enable the department to qualify for delegation of the federal NPDES program to the state and operate such program in accordance with federal law. Only that portion of the facility permit which authorizes a discharge pursuant to s. 402 of the Clean Water Act, as amended, shall be submitted to the United States Environmental Protection Agency for review under that section. To the extent other sections of this chapter apply and do not conflict with federal requirements, the application of such sections to discharges regulated under this section is not prohibited.

(3) An application for an NPDES permit and other approvals from the state relating to the permitted activity shall be granted or denied by the

department within the time allowed for permit review under 40 C.F.R. part 124, subpart A. Other than for stormwater discharge permitting, the decision on issuance or denial of such permit may not be delegated to another agency or governmental authority. The department is specifically exempted from the time limitations provided in ss. 120.60 and 403.0876; provided that upon timely application for renewal, a permit issued under this section shall not expire until the application has been finally acted upon or until the last day for seeking judicial review of the agency order or a later date fixed by order of the reviewing court. However, if the department fails to render a permitting decision within the time allowed by 40 C.F.R. part 124, subpart A, or a memorandum of agreement executed by the department and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, whichever is shorter, the applicant may apply for an order from the circuit court requiring the department to render a decision within a specified time.

(4) The department shall respond, in writing, to any written comments on a pending application for a state NPDES permit which the department receives from the executive director, or his or her designee, of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on matters within the commenting agency's jurisdiction. The department's response shall not constitute agency action for purposes of ss. 120.569 and 120.57 or other provisions of chapter 120.

(5) Certified aquaculture activities under s. 597.004 that have individual production units whose annual production and water discharge are less than the parameters established by the NPDES program are exempt from wastewater management regulations. For purposes herein, the term "individual production units" shall be determined by rule of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

History.--s. 23, ch. 88-393; s. 16, ch. 92-132; s. 76, ch. 93-213; s. 366, ch. 94-356; s. 132, ch. 96-410; s. 1007, ch. 97-103; s. 16, ch. 98-203; s. 22, ch. 98-333; s. 204, ch. 99-245.

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