Major Provisions of the Clean Water Act


2. Coverage: Includes all discharges to “navigable waters”. Navigable waters are defined as “waters of the United States including territorial seas.”

3. §301 Effluent Limitations. Prohibits “the discharge of any pollutant except those made in compliance with the terms of the Act.” Imposes effluent limitations on existing sources based on the nature of the pollutant discharged and whether the outfall is directed to a water body or a publicly owned treatment works (POTW). This is the heart of the CWA.

4. §319 Nonpoint Source Management Programs. Requires states to identify waters that cannot meet water quality standards due to nonpoint sources, identify the activities responsible for the problem, and prepare management plans identifying the controls and programs for specific nonpoint sources.

5. §402 NPDES Permit Program. Establishes a national permit program, the pollution discharge elimination system (NPDES). The NPDES Program that may be administered by EPA or by the states under delegated authority from EPA.

6. §404 Dredge and Fill Operations. Requires a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers for the disposal of dredged or fill material into navigable waters with the concurrence of EPA.

7. §505 Citizen Suits. Authorizes citizen suits against any person who violates an effluent standard or order, or against EPA for failure to perform a nondiscretionary duty.