



Puget Sound Steamship Operators Association

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October 28, 2003

Docket Management Facility (USCG-2003-14273)
U.S. Department of Transportation
Room PL - 401
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590-0001

**RE: Mandatory Ballast Water Management Program for U.S. Waters, Federal Register,
July 30, 2003, Vol. 68, No. 146, (pp. 44691 – 44696)**

The Puget Sound Steamship Operators Association (PSSOA) is a membership association comprised of commercial vessel owners, operators and agents whose vessel's trade in the tidewater ports of Washington State. Our membership represents container, bulk and oil carriers as well as tug and barge companies.

PSSOA fully supports Coast Guard efforts to implement a mandatory federal ballast water management program coordinated and consistent with developing international standards. We are aware of and support the comments submitted by the Shipping Industry Ballast Water Coalition and will not duplicate those comments but submit the following:

(1) Coastal Traffic: Sec. 151.2037 addresses coastal traffic within 200 miles by limiting ballast water discharge to only that amount operationally necessary and requires ballast water records be made available to the Captain of the Port upon request. We urge a modification of this section to allow for development of regional approaches to coastal traffic ballast water management that takes into account areas connected by shipping traffic and similar oceanographic dynamics. As exchange is the primary option pending development of other options, the initial focus would be to develop coastal exchange protocols. Similar to the Great Lakes regional approach over the years, the West Coast including Canada could continue work as a region to establish consistent, practical and safe coastal ballast water exchange procedures that would fit into a national program vice promulgation of different and confusing state programs. We support consideration of a scientifically based standard such as 200 meters depth for coastal traffic reserving the potential use of a distance from shore for enforcement and simplification purposes. This approach would be consistent with the alternative exchange zone concept discussed previously and would work to minimize the need to address the preemption and consultation issues outlined in your paragraph on Federalism. Furthermore, it would provide more specific intentions to

states contemplating further ballast water regulations to address the coastal shipping traffic movement of ballast water.

(2) Enforcement: although the proposed regulations are not designed to address specifics of enforcement procedures, the discussion and reference to document requirements speaks partially to this issue. We urge the Coast Guard to maximize communications with stakeholders, specifically industry and state stakeholders, regarding its specific intentions to use existing authority via the port state control boarding program and other means to enforce these regulations. Enforcement continues to be one of the concerns expressed by affected states. Increased specific and proactive communications on this issue will serve to minimize potential duplication of boarding, document checks and sampling efforts by states and again will lessen the need to address specific preemption and consultation issues.

(3) Treatment Testing Coordination: Alternative environmentally sound methods have yet to be developed and approved. We support and applaud Coast Guard leadership to employ a pragmatic process to develop and approve such methods. Though we find significant information is readily available regarding these efforts, we urge the Coast Guard to consider further and perhaps more formal communications with involved states to help ensure effective federal coordination. This again will serve to minimize duplication and potentially inefficient, confusing and uncoordinated state by state efforts in this regard. We recognize the concerns of affected states and promote that their efforts be coordinated to assist where appropriate in helping achieve effective international and federal approaches to mitigate ballast water risk.

(4) Tug-Barge Units: We note and support AWO's submission regarding mitigation challenges for tug-barge units. Specifically, safety considerations and vessel design are not conducive to offshore exchange as a viable option at present. We acknowledge and support the concerted effort to develop and approve other options while at the same time realizing that tug-barge unit operational differences from deep draft vessels will have to be fully considered. We support AWO's recommendation that the Coast Guard work with industry to develop a set of reasonable and achievable management practices appropriate to barge and towing vessel operations.

The Puget Sound Steamship Operators Association appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important rulemaking and would be pleased to answer any questions relative to this issue or resulting from our comments.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Moore
Executive Director
Puget Sound Steamship Operators Association