



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

Much effort is being expended to clean up impaired waters in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We looked at whether Federal facilities in the watershed were in compliance with Clean Water Act permitted levels, what tools were available for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify permit noncompliance and enforce compliance, and whether EPA's actions were improving compliance at Federal facilities.

Background

One hundred Federal facilities discharge into the Chesapeake Bay or its tributaries. Nine of those facilities operate under major National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. The Clean Water Act provides that any discharges into U.S. waters must be permitted by EPA or a State. The NPDES program assigns discharge amounts to all facilities, including Federal ones. EPA and States regulate compliance with permitted levels and take enforcement actions when necessary.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2007/20070905-2007-P-00032.pdf

Federal Facilities in Chesapeake Bay Watershed Generally Comply with Major Clean Water Act Permits

What We Found

Overall, EPA and the States are doing well managing how major Federal facilities comply with their NPDES permits. In EPA's last reporting period (2004), major Federal facilities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed had a lower rate of Significant Noncompliance than other Federal and non-Federal major-permit facilities nationwide.

EPA and States have a variety of formal and informal tools available to enforce Federal facility compliance with NPDES permits. They employed several of these tools with major Federal facilities. These tools included:

- Multimedia, voluntary agreement, and media press release approaches
- Notices of Violation
- An administrative order
- A Federal Facility Compliance Agreement

Also, EPA developed the Wastewater Integrated Strategy, which seeks to eliminate Federal facility Significant Noncompliance with NPDES permit limits. EPA also worked with the Department of Defense to make NPDES permit compliance a higher priority at military installations (eight of the nine Federal facilities with major NPDES permits are at military installations). Due to our small sample size, we did not determine the tools' relative effectiveness in bringing about and maintaining compliance.

We make no recommendations in this report. Both Region 3 and the Chesapeake Bay Program Office declined to provide formal responses to the draft report.