



## Vessel Deconstruction General Permit

### **Department of Ecology – Water Quality Program November 14, 2013 TAG Meeting Meeting Summary**

This is a summary of the discussion occurring at the November 14<sup>th</sup> Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting. The majority of the meeting was spent discussing a draft proposal from Ecology (available [here](#)). Following are specific points raised and questions discussed. In summary, the majority of those present felt that issuance of a general permit raises significant concerns of; decreasing oversight of a highly complex and dangerous activity, potentially attracting unqualified operators, and increasing risks to worker and public health and safety, and to the environment. The TAG struggled to identify sufficient limitations on coverage, and sufficient permit requirements, to address these concerns.

#### **Permit Coverage:**

- Suggestions to limit coverage to only derelict vessels listed with WDNR, and to limit potential permittees to only WDNR's pool of qualified companies. The group acknowledged that this may be difficult and if accomplished would limit the permit to companies who are already doing this work. Therefore, there may be no significant benefit from creating a general permit.
- Suggestions to limit coverage to only high-risk vessels that cannot be towed to or addressed in a shipyard. The Kalakala was given as example of a vessel that may be too large and unstable to safely tow to and deconstruct in a shipyard. The group acknowledged that a vessel like the Kalakala may require the specificity of an individual NPDES permit, rather than a general permit.
- The proposed 45-60 day coverage issuance timeline leaves only the minimum amount of time for public input (30 days). A longer timeline was suggested due to the complex nature of the work and associated risks.
- Ecology proposed a permit requirement for notification 10 days prior to beginning work. It was also suggested that this notification include not just Ecology but WA L&I, OSHA, and local jurisdictions due to the increased risks associated with deconstruction.

#### **Application Requirements:**

- Question – *Who is an appropriate professional to certify permit required submittals?* Discussion:
  - Shipyard model is to use a network of professionals to address deconstruction including: naval architects, safety professionals, and industrial hygienists. The process often involves: engineered cut plans, lift plans, stability assessments, fire safety plans, and a continuous evaluation of hazards as deconstruction progresses. Salvage companies use a similar network approach to plan for and adaptively manage deconstruction.

- Unlike design (e.g. engineered plans stamped by a professional engineer), deconstruction plans are not typically signed/certified. Because of the uncertainty and risks associated with deconstruction, the operator bears the ultimate responsibility.
  - Current permittees (e.g. shipyards) rely on continued NPDES coverage under an individual permit to remain in business. The TAG raised concerns that a general permittee would not bear similar incentive to remain in compliance. Without certification of plans, it would be difficult gain comparable assurance that a general permittee is qualified to complete a successful deconstruction.
- Other application requirements proposed (materials testing, solid waste plan, etc.) were generally seen as useful/necessary prerequisites for coverage. However, the TAG cautioned that abatement and removal of hazardous materials is a constantly evolving process. As new areas of a vessel are exposed during deconstruction, new and unexpected hazards are often encountered. This reinforces the need for not only good planning, but also skilled professionals adaptively managing the project.

**Other:**

- Question – *Are vessel owners (not derelict vessels) deconstructing vessels in WA?* Discussion:
  - The TAG noted that at this time, vessels being deconstructed are nearly exclusively derelicts where subsidies are available to cover the cost. One shipyard noted that they have received inquiries from companies that own vessels about local deconstruction. However, the gap between cost to deconstruct and profit from scrap materials is generally too wide to support unsubsidized deconstruction.
- Suggestion that perhaps a model individual NPDES permit could be developed and maintained by Ecology, instead of issuance of a general permit. The model individual permit could shorten the time required to issue a permit and allow for site-specific considerations to be properly addressed.