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DISCHARGES FROM VESSELS

Objective

To protect human health and the environment by preventing harmful, polluting substances from being discharged from vessels operating within the Great Lakes.

This annex of the Canada–United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) consolidates previous entries pertaining to shipping activities under the 1987 GLWQA into a single annex. It includes a number of commitments to protect the Great Lakes from the discharge of sewage, garbage and harmful polluting substances from vessels, and from aquatic invasive species in ballast water.

Various principles will guide work under this annex, such as taking into account standards and guidance issued by the International Maritime Organization and implementing domestic laws and regulations for vessel discharges.

Why is action on vessel discharges important?

Shipping activities can affect Great Lakes water quality. This may come as a result of vessels discharging oil, hazardous polluting substances, garbage, wastewater or ballast water.

Commitment to key activities within the 2012 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

- Prevent or prohibit harmful discharges from vessels by:
 - preventing the discharge of harmful quantities of oil or hazardous polluting substances;
 - prohibiting the discharge of garbage;
 - minimizing the discharge of cargo residues;
 - prohibiting the discharge of harmful amounts of wastewater;
 - controlling the discharge of sewage;
 - preventing the release of harmful aquatic invasive species and pathogens as a result of accumulation of micro-organisms, plants, algae, or animals on ships
 - preventing harm from anti-fouling systems;
 - preventing the discharge of aquatic invasive species in ballast water;
 - ensuring adequate facilities for receiving, treating and disposing of vessel wastes;
 - reviewing relevant shipping activities to maintain or improve Great Lakes water quality.

Expected outcomes

- Healthier aquatic ecosystems with reduced threat of impact from aquatic invasive species, oil, and other hazardous polluting substances;
- Compatible and consistent approach to address vessel discharges within the Great Lakes.

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