



Preliminary Effluent Guidelines Program Plan 16

December 2024

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has released *Preliminary Effluent Guidelines Program Plan 16* (Preliminary Plan 16), its latest plan for studying and developing technology-based pollution limits on industrial wastewater discharges (also called effluent).

Public input

With this action, the EPA is soliciting public comment on its preliminary plan for how to use the best available science and wastewater treatment technologies to help protect water bodies and the communities that rely on them from harmful chemicals like per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and nutrient pollution. The EPA plans to undertake some new studies that will provide clarity on the impact of discharges from certain industries on our waterbodies. As we learn more, the EPA will be better equipped to reduce pollutants at their source to safeguard people and the aquatic organisms that rely on healthy waterways. Additionally, the regulations discussed in Preliminary Plan 16 will help prevent harmful wastewater pollutants from being released into waterbodies of the United States, once finalized.

Visit the EPA's [Preliminary Effluent Guidelines Program Plan webpage](#) for more information about how to submit a comment.

Effluent limitations guidelines and standards

Effluent limitations guidelines and pretreatment standards (ELGs) are national, technology-based regulations developed to control industrial wastewater discharges to water bodies and into publicly owned treatment works (POTWs). ELGs are intended to represent the greatest pollutant reductions that are economically achievable for an industry. Clean Water Act Section 304(m) requires the EPA to biennially publish a plan for new and revised ELGs, after public review and comment. The EPA published the last Effluent Guidelines Program Plan (Plan 15) on January 31, 2023.

The EPA plans for new wastewater studies and data collection efforts

Preliminary Plan 16 presents: 1) findings from the EPA's 2022 and 2023 annual reviews of existing ELGs; 2) results from a preliminary review of the Battery Manufacturing, Centralized Waste Treatment, and Oil and Gas Extraction Categories; and 3) an update on the analyses and tools the EPA is enhancing to improve its annual review and biennial planning process. As with previous plans, Preliminary Plan 16 aims to evaluate the extent and nature of PFAS discharges and assess opportunities for limiting those discharges from multiple industrial categories, consistent with the EPA's [PFAS Strategic Roadmap](#).

Preliminary Plan 16 also announces the EPA's intent to initiate several new detailed studies of industrial categories. After analyzing available data, the EPA has determined that detailed studies of the Battery Manufacturing Category, the Centralized Waste Treatment Category, the Oil and Gas Extraction Category, and PFAS processors (industrial facilities engaged in processing raw PFAS into commercial products) are warranted. The goal of these studies is to collect information on pollutant discharges and their potential for treatment, enabling the agency to make informed, data-driven decisions on the need for revised rules to establish new ELGs.

The EPA also intends to develop a generic Information Collection Request (ICR) for collecting effluent data from multiple industrial categories. As discussed in Preliminary Plan 16, the agency would seek the Office of Management Budget's approval of the generic ICR for the purpose of setting a standing information collection budget under which the EPA would collect data on facility operations; wastewater generation, treatment, and management; finances; and environmental impacts to support the annual ELG review process as well as ELG regulatory development. An approved standing information collection budget would enable the EPA to collect data more efficiently than under the current category-by-category ICR approval approach.

Preliminary Plan 16 provides updates related to several regulatory revision actions including:

- Meat and Poultry Products Category to address nutrient discharges;
- Organic Chemicals, Plastics & Synthetic Fibers Category to address PFAS discharges;
- Metal Finishing and Electroplating Categories to address PFAS discharges.
- Landfills Category to address PFAS discharge from landfill leachate; and
- The recently finalized Steam Electric Power Generating Category rulemaking to strengthen certain wastewater pollution discharge limitations for coal-fired power plants that use steam to generate electricity.

Finally, Preliminary Plan 16 provides updates on three ongoing EPA studies of: 1) the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations Category, 2) the Textile Mills Category, and 3) POTW influent for PFAS.

While the EPA intends to undertake the actions outlined in Preliminary Plan 16, the commencement and pace of these activities depend on the agency's Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations and operating plan.

More information

Contact Doruntinë Rexhepi at (202) 566-2532, rexhepi.doruntine@epa.gov. To access the Preliminary ELG Program Plan 16, Federal Register notice, and supporting documents, visit the EPA's [Effluent Guidelines Program website](#).