

industry allow intraplant trading of conventional, nonconventional and toxic pollutants between outfalls under certain circumstances (40 CFR 420.03).

EPA will consider including provisions for trading in the development of new and revised technology-based effluent guidelines and other regulations to achieve technology-based requirements, reduce implementation costs and increase environmental benefits.

5. *Pretreatment Trading.* EPA supports a municipality or regional sewerage authority developing and implementing trading programs among industrial users that are consistent with the pretreatment regulatory requirements at 40 CFR Part 403 and the municipality's or authority's NPDES permit.

6. *Intra-Plant Trading.* EPA supports intra-plant trading that involves the generation and use of credits between multiple outfalls that discharge to the same receiving water from a single facility that has been issued an NPDES permit.

F. *Alignment With The CWA.* Provisions for water quality trading should be aligned with and incorporated into core water quality programs. EPA believes this may be done by including provisions for trading in water quality management plans, the continuing planning process, watershed plans, water quality standards, including antidegradation policy and, by incorporating provisions for trading into TMDLs and NPDES permits.

When developing water quality trades and trading programs, states and tribes should, at a minimum, take into account the following provisions of the CWA and implementing regulations:

1. *Requirements to Obtain Permits.* Sources and activities that are required to obtain a federal permit pursuant to Sections 402 or 404 of the CWA must do so to participate in a trade or trading program.

2. *Incorporating Provisions For Trading Into Permits.* In some cases, specific trades may be identified in NPDES permits, including requirements related to the control of nonpoint sources where appropriate. EPA also supports several flexible approaches for incorporating provisions for trading into NPDES permits: (i) General conditions in a permit that authorize trading and describe appropriate conditions and restrictions for trading to occur, (ii) the use of variable permit limits that may be adjusted up or down based on the quantity of credits generated or used; and/or, (iii) the use of alternate permit limits or conditions that establish restrictions on the amount of a point

source's pollution reduction obligation that may be achieved by the use of credits if trading occurs. EPA also encourages the use of watershed general permits, where appropriate, to establish pollutant-specific limitations for a group of sources in the same or similar categories to achieve net pollutant reductions or water quality goals through trading. Watershed permits issued to point sources should include facility specific effluent limitations or other conditions that would apply in the event the pollutant cap established by the watershed permit is exceeded.

3. *Public Notice, Comment and Opportunity For Hearing.* Notice, comment and opportunity for hearing must be provided for all NPDES permits (40 CFR 124). NPDES permits and fact sheets should describe how baselines and conditions or limits for trading have been established and how they are consistent with water quality standards. EPA does not expect that an NPDES permit would need to be modified to incorporate an individual trade if that permit contains authorization and provisions for trading to occur and the public was given notice and an opportunity to comment and/or attend a public hearing at the time the permit was issued.

4. *Consistency With Standard Methods.* Where methods and procedures (e.g., sampling protocols, monitoring frequencies) are specified by federal regulations or in NPDES permits, they should continue to be used where applicable for measuring compliance for point sources that engage in trading. EPA believes this is necessary to provide clear and consistent standards for measuring compliance and to ensure that appropriate enforcement action can be taken.

5. *Protecting Designated Uses.* EPA does not support any use of credits or trading activity that would cause an impairment of existing or designated uses, adversely affect water quality at an intake for drinking water supply or that would exceed a cap established under a TMDL.

6. *Antibacksliding.* EPA believes that the antibacksliding provisions of Section 303(d)(4) of the CWA will generally be satisfied where a point source increases its discharge through the use of credits in accordance with alternate or variable water quality based effluent limitations contained in an NPDES permit, in a manner consistent with provisions for trading under a TMDL, or consistent with the provisions for pre-TMDL trading included in a watershed plan.

These antibacksliding provisions will also generally be satisfied where a point

source generates pollution reduction credits by reducing its discharge below a water quality based effluent limitation (WQBEL) that implements a TMDL or is otherwise established to meet water quality standards and it later decides to discontinue generating credits, provided that the total pollutant load to the receiving water is not increased, or is otherwise consistent with state or tribal antidegradation policy.

7. *Antidegradation.* Trading should be consistent with applicable water quality standards, including a state's and tribe's antidegradation policy established to maintain and protect existing instream water uses and the level of water quality necessary to support them, as well as high quality waters and outstanding national resource waters (40 CFR 131.12). EPA recommends that state or tribal antidegradation policies include provisions for trading to occur without requiring antidegradation review for high quality waters. EPA does not believe that trades and trading programs will result in "lower water quality" as that term is used in 40 CFR 131.12(a)(2), or that antidegradation review would be required under EPA's regulations when the trades or trading programs achieve a *no net increase* of the pollutant traded and do not result in any impairment of designated uses.

G. *Common Elements of Credible Trading Programs.* EPA believes that, in addition to including provisions to be consistent with the CWA, trading programs should include the following general elements to be credible and successful:

1. *Legal Authority and Mechanisms.* Clear legal authority and mechanisms are necessary for trading to occur. EPA believes the CWA provides authority for EPA, states and tribes to develop a variety of programs and activities to control pollution, including trading programs. The CWA and federal regulations provide authority to incorporate provisions for trading into NPDES permits issued to point sources and for trading under TMDLs that include provisions for trading to occur.

In addition, states and tribes should use specific legal mechanisms to facilitate trading. Provisions for trading may be established through various mechanisms, including: legislation, rule making, incorporating provisions for trading into NPDES permits and establishing provisions for trading in TMDLs or watershed plans. These provisions may incorporate or be supplemented by private contracts between sources or third-party contracts where the third party provides an indemnification or enforcement function.