

PART 323—PERMITS FOR DISCHARGES OF DREDGED OR FILL MATERIAL INTO WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES

Sec.

- 323.1 General.
- 323.2 Definitions.
- 323.3 Discharges requiring permits.
- 323.4 Discharges not requiring permits.
- 323.5 Program transfer to States.
- 323.6 Special policies and procedures.

AUTHORITY: 33 U.S.C. 1344.

SOURCE: 51 FR 41232, Nov. 13, 1986, unless otherwise noted.

§ 323.1 General.

This regulation prescribes, in addition to the general policies of 33 CFR part 320 and procedures of 33 CFR part 325, those special policies, practices, and procedures to be followed by the Corps of Engineers in connection with the review of applications for DA permits to authorize the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States pursuant to section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. 1344) (hereinafter referred to as section 404). (See 33 CFR 320.2(g).) Certain discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States are also regulated under other authorities of the Department of the Army. These include dams and dikes in navigable waters of the United States pursuant to section 9 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 U.S.C. 401; see 33 CFR part 321) and certain structures or work in or affecting navigable waters of the United States pursuant to section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 U.S.C. 403; see 33 CFR part 322). A DA permit will also be required under these additional authorities if they are applicable to activities involving discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States. Applicants for DA permits under this part should refer to the other cited authorities and implementing regulations for these additional permit requirements to determine whether they also are applicable to their proposed activities.

§ 323.2 Definitions.

For the purpose of this part, the following terms are defined:

(a) The term *waters of the United States* and all other terms relating to the geographic scope of jurisdiction are defined at 33 CFR part 328.

(b) The term *lake* means a standing body of open water that occurs in a natural depression fed by one or more streams from which a stream may flow, that occurs due to the widening or natural blockage or cutoff of a river or stream, or that occurs in an isolated natural depression that is not a part of a surface river or stream. The term also includes a standing body of open water created by artificially blocking or restricting the flow of a river, stream, or tidal area. As used in this regulation, the term does not include artificial lakes or ponds created by excavating and/or diking dry land to collect and retain water for such purposes as stock watering, irrigation, settling basins, cooling, or rice growing.

(c) The term *dredged material* means material that is excavated or dredged from waters of the United States.

(d)(1) Except as provided below in paragraph (d)(2), the term *discharge of dredged material* means any addition of dredged material into, including any redeposit of dredged material within, the waters of the United States. The term includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(i) the addition of dredged material to a specified discharge site located in waters of the United States;

(ii) the runoff or overflow from a contained land or water disposal area; and

(iii) any addition, including any redeposit, of dredged material, including excavated material, into waters of the United States which is incidental to any activity, including mechanized landclearing, ditching, channelization, or other excavation.

(2) The term *discharge of dredged material* does not include the following:

(i) discharges of pollutants into waters of the United States resulting from the onshore subsequent processing of dredged material that is extracted for any commercial use (other than fill). These discharges are subject to section 402 of the Clean Water Act even though the extraction and deposit of such material may require a permit from the Corps or applicable State section 404 program.

(ii) activities that involve only the cutting or removing of vegetation above the ground (e.g., mowing, rotary cutting, and chainsawing) where the activity neither substantially disturbs the root system nor involves mechanized pushing, dragging, or other similar activities that redeposit excavated soil material.

(3) Section 404 authorization is not required for the following:

(i) any incidental addition, including redeposit, of dredged material associated with any activity that does not have or would not have the effect of destroying or degrading an area of waters of the United States as defined in paragraphs (d)(4) and (d)(5) of this section; however, this exception does not apply to any person preparing to undertake mechanized landclearing, ditching, channelization and other excavation activity in a water of the United States, which would result in a redeposit of dredged material, unless the person demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Corps, or EPA as appropriate, prior to commencing the activity involving the discharge, that the activity would not have the effect of destroying or degrading any area of waters of the United States, as defined in paragraphs (d)(4) and (d)(5) of this section. The person proposing to undertake mechanized landclearing, ditching, channelization or other excavation activity bears the burden of demonstrating that such activity would not destroy or degrade any area of waters of the United States.

(ii) incidental movement of dredged material occurring during normal dredging operations, defined as dredging for navigation in *navigable waters of the United States*, as that term is defined in part 329 of this chapter, with proper authorization from the Congress and/or the Corps pursuant to part 322 of this Chapter; however, this exception is not applicable to dredging activities in wetlands, as that term is defined at section 328.3 of this Chapter.

(iii) those discharges of dredged material associated with ditching, channelization or other excavation activities in waters of the United States, including wetlands, for which section 404 authorization was not previously required, as determined by the Corps dis-

trict in which the activity occurs or would occur, *provided* that prior to August 25, 1993, the excavation activity commenced or was under contract to commence work and that the activity will be completed no later than August 25, 1994. This provision does not apply to discharges associated with mechanized landclearing. For those excavation activities that occur on an ongoing basis (either continuously or periodically), e.g., mining operations, the Corps retains the authority to grant, on a case-by-case basis, an extension of this 12-month grandfather provision *provided* that the discharger has submitted to the Corps within the 12-month period an individual permit application seeking section 404 authorization for such excavation activity. In no event can the grandfather period under this paragraph extend beyond August 25, 1996.

(iv) certain discharges, such as those associated with normal farming, silviculture, and ranching activities, are not prohibited by or otherwise subject to regulation under section 404. See 33 CFR 323.4 for discharges that do not require permits.

(4) For purposes of this section, an activity associated with a discharge of dredged material destroys an area of waters of the United States if it alters the area in such a way that it would no longer be a water of the United States.

NOTE: Unauthorized discharges into waters of the United States do not eliminate Clean Water Act jurisdiction, even where such unauthorized discharges have the effect of destroying waters of the United States.

(5) For purposes of this section, an activity associated with a discharge of dredged material degrades an area of waters of the United States if it has more than a *de minimis* (i.e., inconsequential) effect on the area by causing an identifiable individual or cumulative adverse effect on any aquatic function.

(e) The term *fill material* means any material used for the primary purpose of replacing an aquatic area with dry land or of changing the bottom elevation of an waterbody. The term does not include any pollutant discharged into the water primarily to dispose of waste, as that activity is regulated

under section 402 of the Clean Water Act. See §323.3(c) concerning the regulation of the placement of pilings in waters of the United States.

(f) The term *discharge of fill material* means the addition of fill material into waters of the United States. The term generally includes, without limitation, the following activities: Placement of fill that is necessary for the construction of any structure in a water of the United States; the building of any structure or impoundment requiring rock, sand, dirt, or other material for its construction; site-development fills for recreational, industrial, commercial, residential, and other uses; causeways or road fills; dams and dikes; artificial islands; property protection and/or reclamation devices such as riprap, groins, seawalls, breakwaters, and revetments; beach nourishment; levees; fill for structures such as sewage treatment facilities, intake and outfall pipes associated with power plants and subaqueous utility lines; and artificial reefs. The term does not include plowing, cultivating, seeding and harvesting for the production of food, fiber, and forest products (See §323.4 for the definition of these terms). See §323.3(c) concerning the regulation of the placement of pilings in waters of the United States.

(g) The term *individual permit* means a Department of the Army authorization that is issued following a case-by-case evaluation of a specific project involving the proposed discharge(s) in accordance with the procedures of this part and 33 CFR part 325 and a determination that the proposed discharge is in the public interest pursuant to 33 CFR part 320.

(h) The term *general permit* means a Department of the Army authorization that is issued on a nationwide or regional basis for a category or categories of activities when:

(1) Those activities are substantially similar in nature and cause only minimal individual and cumulative environmental impacts; or

(2) The general permit would result in avoiding unnecessary duplication of regulatory control exercised by another Federal, State, or local agency provided it has been determined that the environmental consequences of the

action are individually and cumulatively minimal. (See 33 CFR 325.2(e) and 33 CFR part 330.)

[51 FR 41232, Nov. 13, 1986, as amended at 58 FR 45035, Aug. 25, 1993; 58 FR 48424, Sept. 15, 1993]

§ 323.3 Discharges requiring permits.

(a) *General.* Except as provided in §323.4 of this part, DA permits will be required for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States. Certain discharges specified in 33 CFR part 330 are permitted by that regulation ("nationwide permits"). Other discharges may be authorized by district or division engineers on a regional basis ("regional permits"). If a discharge of dredged or fill material is not exempted by §323.4 of this part or permitted by 33 CFR part 330, an individual or regional section 404 permit will be required for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States.

(b) *Activities of Federal agencies.* Discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States done by or on behalf of any Federal agency, other than the Corps of Engineers (see 33 CFR 209.145), are subject to the authorization procedures of these regulations. Agreement for construction or engineering services performed for other agencies by the Corps of Engineers does not constitute authorization under the regulations. Division and district engineers will therefore advise Federal agencies and instrumentalities accordingly and cooperate to the fullest extent in expediting the processing of their applications.

(c) *Pilings.* (1) Placement of pilings in waters of the United States constitutes a discharge of fill material and requires a section 404 permit when such placement has or would have the effect of a discharge of fill material. Examples of such activities that have the effect of a discharge of fill material include, but are not limited to, the following: Projects where the pilings are so closely spaced that sedimentation rates would be increased; projects in which the pilings themselves effectively would replace the bottom of a waterbody; projects involving the placement of pilings that would reduce the reach or impair the flow or circula-