

Superintendents' Statement
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NOAA finalizes Coast Guard discharge exceptions in Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank national marine sanctuaries

Dan Howard, Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent, dan.howard@noaa.gov
Maria Brown, Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent,
maria.brown@noaa.gov

Today, NOAA is issuing a final rule to make an exception for certain U.S. Coast Guard discharges from regulatory prohibitions within the federal waters of Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries' expansion areas, beyond 3.5 miles (3 nautical miles) from shore in the northern and western parts of the sanctuaries.

In an effort to allow the Coast Guard to fulfill mission requirements, the final rule allows two types of discharges in the sanctuaries' expansion areas: 1) untreated sewage and non-clean gray water from Coast Guard vessels, 2) ammunition and pyrotechnic materials (e.g., warning projectiles, flares, smoke floats and marine markers) from Coast Guard vessels and aircraft used during Coast Guard use of force (live fire or gunnery) and search and rescue training activities.

On occasion, Coast Guard vessels have had insufficient capacity to hold untreated sewage and non-clean graywater for some long duration patrol activities in the expanded sanctuaries. The area is critical to the Coast Guard for training and response activities.

Ongoing Coast Guard operations in the expansion areas will continue unchanged and no changes are being made to the regulatory prohibitions or exceptions applicable to the pre-expansion boundaries of the two national marine sanctuaries. NOAA has taken this action to enable the Coast Guard to fulfill certain mission requirements and to further the collaborative relationship with the Coast Guard and ongoing activities supporting sanctuary management.

NOAA received public comment on a proposed rule and draft environmental assessment for the proposed exceptions from November 22, 2017 to January 16, 2018. The final rule will become effective 30 days after its publication in the Federal Register.

More information may be found at <https://farallones.noaa.gov/manage/regulations.html>.

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