

Earl Waesche, NBF Legislative Director

ewaesche@comcast.net

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Virginia Seeks to Expand E-0 Gasoline Access: As reported by the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), the state of Virginia has requested an exemption from the EPA Reformulated Gasoline Program (RGP) in order to sell ethanol-free RFG gasoline at marinas in northern Virginia, Richmond-Petersburg and Hampton Roads.

E-0 currently is sold in areas of the state that are not required to sell RFG gas. The request was required by Senate Bill 557, which passed during the 2016 legislative session.

EPA Seeks Comment on Testing Method of Antifouling Paint: As reported by Trade Only, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released what the NMMA said is an important testing method that could benefit boaters and marinas faced with strict regulation of copper-based antifouling paint. The EPA is seeking public comment on the new method – the saltwater biotic ligand model, which NMMA said is of particular interest in California, where regulators have set strict limits on dissolved copper in Marina del Rey and other basins, leading to restrictions on copper-based paint.

If approved, NMMA said the model would provide a cost-effective scientific tool, to determine copper toxicity in site-specific locations, avoiding implementing mitigation methods where they are not needed. NMMA encourages stakeholders to review the documents and file comments supporting final approval of the method.

The 60-day comment period ends Sept. 27. More details and filing instructions can be found by Ctrl-Left Click on mouse:

www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-08/documents/copper-estuarine-marine-draft-factsheet.pdf. The 60-day comment period ends Sept. 27, with more detail and filing instructions at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-07-29/pdf/2016-18014.pdf

NMMA continues ethanol fight as EPA fails to comply with reporting requirements: A report released from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Inspector General shows it failed to "meet certain statutory requirements necessary to identify environmental impacts of the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS)." Because the EPA failed to comply with reporting and analysis requirements, the EPA, congress and other stakeholders lack key information on biofuel impacts needed to make science-based decisions about the RFS.

"The latest report from the EPA is further evidence there is a clear need for the Renewable Fuel Standard to be reformed," said NMMA President Thom Dammrich. "If the EPA can't comply with reporting and analysis requirements, we can't expect them to effectively administer such a complex law and be confident that they will have the data to make informed decisions and properly weigh the concerns of the recreational boating industry and other small engine manufacturers."

Other groups echoed NMMA's sentiments, taking issue with the EPA's reporting.

National Wildlife Federation President and CEO Collin O'Mara stated, "We applaud EPA's Inspector General for finding that the agency has been woefully negligent in tracking and reporting on the environmental impacts associated with the corn ethanol mandate. While we are sympathetic to the vast work EPA has to do despite severe budget cuts, the agency has failed to comply with the law by gathering even the most basic data about the air pollution, wildlife habitat losses, and waterway degradation resulting from this well-intentioned but devastating policy. It is unacceptable that Congress and the American people are being asked to wait another year and a half to receive information that will allow them to understand the magnitude of the wildlife habitat loss and water degradation – which they cannot do unless EPA tracks and reports on these devastating impacts."

National Council of Chain Restaurants' Executive Director Rob Green said, "This revelation is the latest in a steady stream of failures associated with the ethanol mandate, and should be a wake-up call to Congress – the time is now to repeal the flawed RFS mandate. Any clear-eyed view of the EPA's performance over the 11-year history of the RFS will recognize that the mandate has always been driven more by political considerations than science, or benefit to the environment or consumers. From documented damage to food commodity production and markets to scientific evidence that clearly shows that corn-based ethanol is bad for the environment, the failures of the RFS are clear and convincing."

Recorder from Cargo Ship El Faro Recovered: The Voyage Data Recorder (VDR) from El Faro, a US flagged cargo ship that sank during Hurricane Joaquin in October 2015, was successfully recovered from the ocean floor late Monday evening.

The recovery of the capsule caps a 10-month-long effort to retrieve the recorder, which was designed to record navigational data and communications between crewmembers on the ship's bridge. Investigators hope the recorder will reveal information about the final hours of El Faro's voyage and the circumstances leading up to the sinking.

"The recovery of the recorder has the potential to give our investigators greater insight into the incredible challenges that the El Faro crew faced," said NTSB Chairman Christopher A. Hart, "but it's just one component of a very complex investigation. There is still a great deal of work to be done in order to understand how the many factors converged that led to the sinking and the tragic loss of 33 lives. I want to thank the dedicated professionals in the many organizations — especially the U.S. Navy, the Coast Guard, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, the National Science Foundation and the University of Rhode Island — who worked with NTSB investigators and support staff over three missions in 10 months to make this successful recovery possible," said Hart.

Military Sealift Command's fleet ocean tug USNS Apache departed Virginia Beach, Virginia, with personnel from the NTSB, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy and Phoenix International aboard. After arriving at the accident location on Monday morning, technicians maneuvered CURV-21, a deep ocean remotely operated underwater vehicle, down about 15,000 feet to the sea floor where the wreckage of El Faro rests.

Specialized tools were used to extricate the VDR capsule from the mast structure to which it was attached. The capsule was recovered to the deck of the ocean tug at about 10:30 pm.

The Voyage Data Recorder will be examined while at sea by NTSB investigators aboard the USNS Apache, to assess the condition of the device and to ensure proper preservation for readout and further examination ashore. The VDR will be transported to the NTSB's laboratory here after the Apache returns from sea on or about Aug. 12, 2016. Once at the NTSB's lab a team of specialists will audition the recording. It is not yet known how long it may take to review the data and audio information that may be captured on El Faro's VDR. While the minimum design requirement for VDRs of this type is for 12 hours of recording, it may contain additional information -- the review of which is a thorough and time consuming undertaking. NTSB will provide updates as investigators learn more about the condition and contents of the El Faro's VDR.

While investigators examine the VDR, additional photo and video-documentation of the El Faro wreckage and debris field will be completed, concluding NTSB's activities at the site. No further missions to the accident site are planned unless warranted as the investigation continues.

NOAA Fisheries Releases Fisheries Allocation Policy: As reported by NMMA, in response to decades of criticism over not examining how the nation's public marine fisheries resources are divided among fishing stakeholders, NOAA Fisheries released a Fisheries Allocation Review Policy that describes potential criteria for reviewing fisheries allocations. The recreational fishing and boating community expressed appreciation for this long-awaited recognition of the need to have an allocation policy, but also concern about the lack of firm commitments and timelines for initiating allocation reviews.

“We recognize and appreciate that allocation reviews are inherently difficult, but these decisions are too important for managers to continue dragging their feet,” said Mike Leonard, Ocean Resource Policy Director for the American Sport-Fishing Association.

In most federally managed fisheries that are targeted by both recreational and commercial fishermen, the formula used for dividing the quota between the two sectors was determined decades ago based on historic catch. Many in the recreational fishing community contend that these decisions need to be updated based on modern criteria that take into account the economic, social and conservation benefits the sectors provide to the nation.

The Fisheries Allocation Review Policy provides guidance to the Regional Fishery Management Councils on when to revisit allocations and what factors they might consider when making allocation decisions. Within the next three years, or as soon as “practicable,” the Councils are responsible for determining what triggers would prompt a review of specific fishery allocations.