



EPA's Region 6 Office

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Clean Water Act - Citizen Suits

Section 505, 33 U.S.C. 1365

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section and section 309(g)(6), any citizen may commence a civil action on his own behalf-- (1) against any person (including (i) the United States, and (ii) any other governmental instrumentality or agency to the extent permitted by the eleventh amendment to the constitution) who is alleged to be in violation of (A) an effluent standard or limitation under this Act or (b) an order issued by the Administrator or a State with respect to such a standard or limitation, or (2) against the Administrator where there is alleged a failure of the Administrator to perform any act of duty under this Act which is not discretionary with the Administrator.

The district courts shall have jurisdiction, without regard to the amount in controversy or the citizenship of the parties, to enforce such an effluent standard or limitation, or such an order, or to order the Administrator to perform such act or duty, as the case may be, and to apply any appropriate civil penalties under section 309(d) of this Act.

(b) No action may be commenced--

(1) under subsection (a)(1) of this section--

(A) prior to sixty days after the plaintiff has given notice of the alleged violation (i) to the Administrator, (ii) to the State in which the alleged violation occurs, and (iii) to any alleged violator of the standard, limitation, or order, or

(B) if the Administrator or State has commenced and is diligently prosecuting a civil or criminal action in a court of the United States, or a State to require compliance with the standard limitation, or order, but in any such action in a court of the United States any citizen may intervene as a matter of right.

(2) under subsection (a)(2) of this section prior to sixty days after the plaintiff has given notice of such action to the Administrator, except that such action may be brought immediately after such notification in the case of an action under this section respecting a violation of sections 306 and 307(a) of this Act. Notice under this subsection shall be given in such manner as the Administrator shall prescribe by regulation.

(c)

(1) Any action respecting a violation by a discharge source of an effluent standard or limitation or an order respecting such standard or limitation may be brought under this section only in the judicial district in which such source is located.

(2) In such action under this section, the Administrator, if not a party, may intervene as a matter of right.

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(3) Protection of the United States.--Whenever any action is brought under this section in a court of the United States, the plaintiff shall serve a copy of the complaint on the Attorney General and the Administrator. No consent judgment shall be entered in an action in which the United States is not a party prior to 45 days following the receipt of a copy of the proposed consent judgment by the Attorney General and the Administrator.

(d) The court, in issuing any final order in any action brought pursuant to this section, may award costs of litigation (including reasonable attorney and expert witness fees) to any *prevailing or substantially prevailing party*, whenever the court determines such award is appropriate. The court may, if a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction is sought, require the filing of a bond or equivalent security in accordance with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.


(e) Nothing in this section shall restrict any right which any person (or class of persons) may have under any statute or common law to seek enforcement of any effluent standard or limitation or to seek any other relief (including relief against the Administrator or a State agency).

(f) For purposes of this section, the term "effluent standard or limitation under this Act" means (1) effective July 1, 1973, an unlawful act under subsection (a) of section 301 of this Act; (2) an effluent limitation or other limitation under section 301 or 302 of this Act; (3) standard or performance under section 306 of this act; (4) prohibition, effluent standard or pretreatment standards under section 307 of this Act; (5) certification under section 401 of this Act; [or] (6) a permit or condition thereof issued under section 402 of this Act, which is in effect under this Act (including a requirement applicable by reason of section 313 of this Act); or (7) a regulation under section 405(d) of this Act.

(g) For the purposes of this section the term "citizen" means a person or persons having an interest which is or may be adversely affected.

(h) A Governor of a State may commence a civil action under subsection (a), without regard to the limitations of subsection (b) of this section, against the Administrator where there is alleged a failure of the Administrator to enforce an effluent standard or limitation under this Act the violation of which is occurring in another State and is causing an adverse effect on the public health or welfare in his State or is causing a violation of any water quality requirement in his State.

You may wish to review other portions of the [Federal Water Pollution Control Act](#)

 (more commonly referred to as the Clean Water Act).