sediments and to control sources of contamination.

The full report to Congress comprises three currently available volumes, and one volume in preparation. Volume 1: National Sediment Quality Survey is a screening analysis to qualitatively assess the probability of associated adverse human or ecological effects at sampling stations based on a weight of evidence evaluation. Volume 2: Data Summary for Areas of Probable Concern (APC) includes sampling station location maps and chemical and biological summary data for APC watersheds. Volume 3: National Sediment Contaminant Point Source Inventory is a screening analysis to identify probable point source contributors of sediment pollutants. Volume 4: National Sediment Contaminant Nonpoint Source Inventory is a screening analysis to identify probable nonpoint source contributors of sediment pollutants (in preparation).

ADDRESSES: Requests for copies of Incidence and Severity of Sediment Contamination in Surface Waters of the United States (Volume 1 EPA document number EPA 823–R–97–006; Volume 2 EPA document number EPA 823–R–97–007; Volume 3 EPA document number EPA 823–R–97–008) should be sent to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Center for Environmental Publications and Information, 11029 Kenwood Road, Building 5, Cincinnati, Ohio 45242; telephone: 513–891–6561, fax: 513–891–6685.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas M. Armitage or F. James Keating, Risk Assessment and Management Branch, Office of Science and Technology, Mail Code 4305, 401 M Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20460; telephone 202–260–7301.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Incidence and Severity of Sediment Contamination in Surface Waters of the United States describes the accumulation of chemical contaminants in river, lake, ocean, and estuary bottoms and includes a screening assessment of the potential for associated adverse effects to human and environmental health. EPA studied available data from 65% of the 2,111 watersheds in the continental U.S. and identified 96 watersheds that contain ''areas of probable concern''. In portions of these watersheds, environmental conditions may be unsuitable for bottom dwelling creatures, and fish that live in these waters may contain chemicals at levels unsafe for regular consumption. Areas of probable concern are located in regions affected by urban and agricultural runoff, municipal and industrial waste discharge, and other pollution sources. EPA recommends that resource managers fully examine the risks to human health and the environment in these watersheds. Authorities should take steps to ensure that major pollution sources are effectively controlled and that plans are in place to improve sediment conditions and to support long-term health goals.

Dated: January 8, 1998.

Robert Perciasepe,

Assistant Administrator for Office of Water.

[FR Doc. 98–940 Filed 1–13–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560–50–P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL–5949–7]

Proposed Reissuance of the NPDES General Permit for the Western Portion of the Outer Continental Shelf of the Gulf of Mexico; (GMG290000)

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Notice of proposed NPDES general permit reissuance.

SUMMARY: EPA Region 6 today proposes to reissue the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general permit for the Western Portion of the Outer Continental Shelf of the Gulf of Mexico (No. GMG290000) for discharges from new sources, existing sources, and new dischargers in the Offshore Subcategory of the Oil and Gas Extraction Point Source Category (40 CFR part 435, subpart A). The existing permit published in the **Federal Register** at 61 FR 41609 on August 9, 1996 authorized discharges from exploration, development, and production facilities located in and discharging to Federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico seaward of the outer boundary of the territorial seas off Louisiana and Texas. The discharge of produced water to that portion of the Outer Continental Shelf from Offshore Subcategory facilities located in the territorial seas off Louisiana and Texas was also authorized by that permit. As proposed, the permit will be reissued with few changes.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent to: Regional Administrator, Region 6, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202–2733

Comments may also be submitted via EMAIL to the following address: turner.wilma@epamail.epa.gov

DATES: Comments must be received by March 16, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Wilma Turner, Region 6, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202–2733. Telephone: (214) 665–7516.

A complete draft permit and/or a fact sheet more fully explaining the proposal may be obtained from Ms. Turner. In addition, the Agency's current administrative record on the proposal is available for examination at the Region's Dallas offices during normal working hours after providing Ms. Turner 24 hours advanced notice. Additionally, a copy of the proposed permit, fact sheet, and this **Federal Register** Notice may be obtained on the Internet at: http://www.epa.gov/earth1r6/6wq/6wq.htm

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulated Entities

EPA intends to use the proposed permit to regulate oil and gas extraction facilities located in the Outer Continental Shelf of the Western Gulf of Mexico, e.g., offshore oil and gas extraction platforms, but other types of facilities may also be subject to the permit. To determine whether your (facility, company, business, organization, etc.) may be affected by today's action, you should carefully examine the applicability criteria in part I, section A.1 of the draft permit. Questions on the permit's application to specific facilities may also be directed to Ms. Turner at the telephone number or address listed above.

The expiring permit contains limitations conforming to EPA's Oil and Gas extraction, Offshore Subcategory Effluent Limitations Guidelines at 40 CFR part 435 and additional requirements assuring that regulated discharges will cause no unreasonable degradation of the marine environment, as required by section 403(c) of the Clean Water Act. Specific information on the derivation of those limitations and conditions is contained in the fact sheet. With the changes described below, EPA Region 6 proposes to retain those limitations and conditions in the reissued permit. It is, however, proposing minor wording changes to some of those requirements to enhance their clarity.

Region 6 proposes to authorize new discharges of seawater and freshwater to which treatment chemicals have been added, subject to limitations on free oil, concentration of treatment chemicals, and acute toxicity. These new permit limitations will apply technology based limitations to miscellaneous discharges to which treatment chemicals such as biocides and corrosion inhibitors have been added. They will also ensure that

those discharges meet Ocean Discharge Criteria under section 403(c) of the Clean Water Act. Additionally, the maximum discharge rate limitation for produced water is proposed to be removed from the permit. To account for this change the produced water critical dilution tables have been expanded in the proposed permit, thus ensuring the discharges will be compliant with Ocean Discharge Criteria.

Other Legal Requirements

Oil Spill Requirements

Section 311 of the CWA, ''the Act'', prohibits the discharge of oil and hazardous materials in harmful quantities. Discharges that are in compliance with NPDES permits are excluded from the provisions of section 311. However, the permit does not preclude the institution of legal action or relieve permittees from any responsibilities, liabilities, or penalties for other, unauthorized discharges of oil and hazardous materials which are covered by section 311 of the Act.

Endangered Species Act

As explained at 58 FR 53203 (October 14, 1993), EPA found that issuance of the New Source General Permit would not adversely affect any listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat and requested written concurrence on that determination from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). On November 4, 1993, NMFS provided such concurrence. The same determination was made and concurrence received from National Marine Fisheries Service when the existing OCS general permit was reissued on November 19, 1992, and modified on December 3, 1993.

The Region now finds that adoption of the proposed reissued permit is unlikely to adversely affect any threatened or endangered species or its critical habitat. Discharges proposed to be authorized by the reissued permit are not significantly different than those authorized by the expired permit, for which the National Marine Fisheries Service concurred with EPA's determination that issuance of the permit would not adversely affect any listed threatened or endangered species. Additionally, as required by EPA's ocean discharge criteria at 40 CFR 125, subpart M, the effluent limitations of the proposed permit are protective of sensitive marine organisms. EPA is again seeking written concurrence from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on this determination.

Ocean Discharge Criteria Evaluation

For discharges into waters of the territorial sea, contiguous zone, or oceans CWA section 403 requires EPA to consider guidelines for determining potential degradation of the marine environment in issuance of NPDES permits. These Ocean Discharge Criteria (40 CFR 125, subpart M) are intended to ''prevent unreasonable degradation of the marine environment and to authorize imposition of effluent limitations, including a prohibition of discharge, if necessary, to ensure this goal'' (45 FR 65942, October 3, 1980). At 58 FR 41476, 58 FR 63964, and 61 FR 41609 EPA Region 6 determined that discharges in compliance with the Western Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf general permit (GMG290000) would not cause unreasonable degradation of the marine environment. Since this proposed reissued permit is nearly identical to the previous permit, the Region again finds that issuance of the proposed general permit will not cause unreasonable degradation of the marine environment.

Coastal Zone Management Act

The proposed permit is generally as stringent as the previous general permit for New and Existing Sources in the Oil and Gas Extraction Category for the Western Portion of the Outer Continental Shelf of the Gulf of Mexico (GMG290000) which has been determined to be consistent with Louisiana's Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP). Since it covers the same operations and as proposed is nearly identical to the previous permit, EPA has determined that the activities which are proposed to be authorized by this permit are consistent with the local and state Coastal Zone Management Plans. The proposed permit and consistency determination will be submitted to the State of Louisiana and the State of Texas for interagency review at the time of public notice.

Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act

The Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) of 1972 regulates the dumping of all types of materials into ocean waters and establishes a permit program for ocean dumping. In addition the MPRSA establishes Marine Sanctuaries Program, implemented by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which requires NOAA to designate ocean waters as marine sanctuaries for the purpose of preserving or restoring their conservation, recreational, ecological or aesthetic values. Pursuant to the Marine Protection and Sanctuaries Act, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration has designated the Flower Garden Banks, an area within the coverage of the OCS general permit, a marine sanctuary. The OCS general permit prohibits discharges in areas of biological concern, including marine sanctuaries. No change adopted today affects that prohibition.

State Water Quality Standards and State Certification

Because state waters are not included in the area covered by this NPDES general permit, no state waters are affected by the discharges it authorizes. Thus, the state water quality certification provisions of CWA section 401 do not apply to the proposed permit.

Executive Order 12866

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has exempted this action from the review requirements of Executive Order 12291 pursuant to Section 8(b) of that order. Guidance on Executive Order 12866 contain the same exemptions on OMB review as existed under Executive Order 12291. In fact, however, EPA prepared a regulatory impact analysis in connection with its promulgation of guidelines on which a number of the permit's provisions are based and submitted it to OMB for review. See 58 FR 12494.

Paperwork Reduction Act

The information collection required by this permit has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*, in submission made for the NPDES permit program and assigned OMB control numbers 2040–0086 (NPDES permit application) and 2040–0004 (discharge monitoring reports).

Since this permit is very similar in reporting and application requirements and in discharges which are required to be monitored as the previous Western Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) general permit (GMG290000) the paperwork burdens are expected to be nearly identical. When it issued the previous OCS general permit, EPA estimated it would take an affected facility three hours to prepare the request for coverage and 38 hours per year to prepare discharge monitoring reports. It is estimated that the time required to prepare the request for coverage and discharge monitoring reports for the reissued permit will be the same.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq,* requires that EPA prepare a regulatory flexibility analysis for regulations that have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities. As indicated below, the permit issued today is not a ''rule'' subject to the Regulatory Flexibility Act . EPA prepared a regulatory flexibility analysis, however, on the promulgation of the Offshore Subcategory guidelines on which many of the permit's effluent limitations are based. That analysis shows that issuance of this permit will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities.

Unfunded Mandates Reform Act

Section 201 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA), Public Law 104–4, generally requires Federal agencies to assess the effects of their ''regulatory actions'' on State, local, and tribal governments and the private sector. UMRA uses the term ''regulatory actions'' to refer to regulations. (See, e.g., UMRA section 201, ''Each agency shall * * * assess the effects of Federal regulatory actions * * * (other than to the extent that such regulations incorporate requirements specifically set forth in law)'' (emphasis added)). UMRA section 102 defines ''regulation'' by reference to section 658 of Title 2 of the U.S. Code, which in turn defines ''regulation'' and ''rule'' by reference to section 601(2) of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA). That section of the RFA defines ''rule'' as ''any rule for which the agency publishes a notice of proposed rulemaking pursuant to section 553(b) of [the Administrative Procedure Act (APA)], or any other law * * *''.

NPDES general permits are not ''rules'' under the APA and thus not subject to the APA requirement to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking. NPDES general permits are also not subject to such a requirement under the CWA. While EPA publishes a notice to solicit public comment on draft general permits, it does so pursuant to the CWA section 402(a) requirement to provide ''an opportunity for a hearing.'' Thus, NPDES general permits are not ''rules'' for RFA or UMRA purposes.

EPA has determined that the proposed permit would not contain a Federal requirement that may result in expenditures of $100 million or more for State, local and tribal governments, in the aggregate, or the private sector in any one year.

The Agency also believes that the permit would not significantly nor uniquely affect small governments. For UMRA purposes, ''small governments'' is defined by reference to the definition of ''small governmental jurisdiction'' under the RFA. (See UMRA section 102(1), referencing 2 U.S.C. 658, which references section 601(5) of the RFA.) ''Small governmental jurisdiction'' means governments of cities, counties, towns, etc., with a population of less than 50,000, unless the agency establishes an alternative definition.

The permit, as proposed, also would not uniquely affect small governments because compliance with the proposed permit conditions affects small governments in the same manner as any other entities seeking coverage under the permit. Additionally, EPA does not expect small governments to operate facilities authorized to discharge by this permit.

National Environmental Policy Act

When it was proposed, EPA determined that issuance of the now expired NPDES New Source General Permit for the Western Portion of the Outer Continental Shelf of the Gulf of Mexico was a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Thus, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, evaluation of the potential environmental consequences of the permit action in the form of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was required. The Minerals Management Service had previously examined the environmental consequences in their final EIS which was conducted for oil and gas lease sales 142 and 143 in the OCS Region of the Gulf of Mexico. EPA adopted that EIS and prepared a Supplemental EIS (SEIS) to allow for additional consideration and evaluation of potential impacts on air quality, water quality, including radium in produced water, and cumulative effects. The Final SEIS was completed in December 1994 and the Record of Decision was prepared and dated September 28, 1995.

Reissuance of the NPDES general permit for New and Existing Sources in the Western Portion of the Outer Continental Shelf of the Gulf of Mexico will not result in any new impacts which were not subjected to NEPA analysis in either Mineral Management Service's EIS or the SEIS produced by EPA Region 6. All discharges proposed to be authorized by the reissued permit were addressed in that NEPA Review. Thus EPA does not propose to prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement for this action.

William B. Hathaway,

Director, Water Quality Protection Division, EPA Region 6.

[FR Doc. 98–939 Filed 1–13–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560–50–P

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

[Notice 1998–1]

Filing Dates for the New York Special Election

AGENCY: Federal Election Commission.

ACTION: Notice of filing dates for special election.

SUMMARY: New York has scheduled a special election on February 3, 1998, to fill the U.S. House seat in the Sixth Congressional District vacated by Representative Floyd Flake.

Committees required to file reports in connection with the Special General Election on February 3 should file a Pre-General Report on January 22, 1998; and a Post-General Election Report on March 5, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Bobby Werfel, Information Division, 999 E Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20463, Telephone: (202) 219–3420; Toll Free (800) 424–9530.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: All principal campaign committees of candidates who participate in the New York Special General Election and all other political committees not filing monthly which support candidates in the Special Election shall file a 12-day Pre-General Report on January 22, with coverage dates from the close of the last report filed, or the date of the committee's first activity, whichever is later, through January 14, and a Post-General Report on March 5, with coverage dates from January 15 through February 23, 1998.