

**PORT OF SEATTLE**  
**MEMORANDUM**

**COMMISSION AGENDA**

**Item No.** 9c

**Date of Meeting** October 27, 2009

**DATE:** October 16, 2009

**TO:** Tay Yoshitani, Chief Executive Officer

**FROM:** Stephanie Jones Stebbins, Senior Manager, Seaport Environmental Programs

**SUBJECT:** Cruise Ship Lines Memorandum of Understanding and 2008 Assessment of  
Cruise Ship Environmental Effects in Washington

**BACKGROUND**

**Cruise Memorandum of Understanding.**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Washington Department of Ecology, the Northwest Cruise Ship Association (NWCA) and the Port of Seattle (POS) was signed on April 20, 2004. This MOU covers the large passenger vessels that are members of the NWCA, and either homeport or conduct a “port of call” at the POS cruise terminals. The MOU prohibits the discharge of both black and gray waters to Washington waters from all cruise ships except discharges treated with advanced wastewater treatment systems (AWTS) that have been approved for discharge by the Department of Ecology. After each cruise season, a meeting is conducted between the MOU stakeholders to review the cruise season and assess the environmental effects and determine if any amendments are appropriate to meeting the goal of protecting Washington’s waters from cruise ship discharges. The MOU has been amended each year as the result of this meeting. The MOU amendments discussed in the January, 2009 meeting were finalized on May 19, 2009. The amendments included the following Washington State Department of Health recommendation: no discharge of AWTS treated gray water within a half a mile of shellfish beds; defining a “virus and disinfection upset condition” that would require no discharges. An MOU amendment also requires whole effluent toxicity (WET) testing for only those vessels that have submitted documentation for continuous AWTS discharge. In the 2008 season, only two vessels submitted documentation of continuous discharge.

Ecology’s 2008 Assessment of Cruise Ship Environmental Effects in Washington concluded that the “MOU continues to be a valuable tool in meeting the goal of protecting Washington’s marine waters from cruise ship wastewater.” The cruise lines and vessels operating within the MOU were in compliance throughout the season. The sampling results for the conventional pollutants continue to show excellent effluent quality. One cruise line did not conduct the required WET test for its continuous AWTS discharge, but that cruise line’s vessel did not discharge to Washington’s waters in 2008. Ecology recommends that the MOU continue to be used as a complement to environmental regulations until state specific waste management regulations for cruise ships are put in place.