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Discharges and air emissions from cruise ships have an incredibly damaging impact on ocean and coastal areas throughout the world. The vast majority of cruise ships utilize minimal water treatment, resulting in millions of gallons of waste being discharged directly into the ocean, sometimes in critical aquatic ecosystems and in violation of federal requirements. Some cruise ship waste such as "gray water"- water that comes from sinks, showers, baths, laundry and galleys- receive no treatment at all! These discharges not only impact large numbers of fish and marine life, but also coastal areas, birds, and marine mammals. Additionally, untreated air pollution from cruise ships release tons of greenhouse gasses each cruise, and severely and negatively contribute adversely to onshore human health.

Through our two years of collaboration with Jam Cruise, Rock the Earth got a first-hand look at the growing trend of collaboration between the music industry and the cruise industry. While we are proud of our work in 2006 and 2007 to green Jam Cruise, we found that there is larger issue at play with regard to the damaging impact that cruises have worldwide on our oceans and coastal areas. As highlighted by a recent EPA report, without cruise lines taking more effective measures to curb air and water pollution, this growing sector of recreation is increasing its damaging impacts on aquatic ecosystems and the planet overall.

It is our view that cruise lines have a legal and moral obligation to take measures to reduce their impact on the environment, and cannot continue to operate outside of legal requirements simply because operations take place in international waters. Cost-effective measures that cruise lines can easily implement to curtail their deleterious impacts include: holding all waste for on-shore treatment and discharge; installing advanced wastewater treatment systems on all vessels (already required for cruise ships traveling to Alaska); installing on-board continuous monitoring devices and utilizing independent observers to insure compliance with legal requirements; ceasing all discharges in coastal and environmentally sensitive areas such as marine protection areas and marine sanctuaries; treating

air emissions with in-engine modifications, humidification and use of cleaner fuels along with after-treatment technologies such as catalytic reduction and seawater scrubbing.

Rock the Earth is proud to announce a new partnership with Friends of the Earth (formerly Bluewater Network), to challenge these damaging practices by the cruise industry. In February 2008, we commented on a draft to the recent EPA Report.

Links:

RtE's Letter to EPA dated August 1, 2008 regarding proposed NPDES regulations for discharges

RtE's Letter to EPA dated January 31, 2008

Friend of the Earth's Letter to EPA dated February 19, 2008 (to which RtE was a signatory)