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Ohio EPA To Hold Public Information Sessions on Draft Water Quality Rules

Ohio EPA is accepting comments on four related draft rule packages governing water quality until June 6, 2011. To enhance understanding of the rules, the Agency will offer an information session in early May.

A meeting will be held on May 2, 2011 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Ohio Department of Agriculture, 8995 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg.

Ohio EPA is seeking public comments on the following four groups of rules.

- **Water quality standards triennial review**
The package would update human health criteria to meet U.S. EPA standards and add designated uses for very small streams, such as channelized drainage ditches. It would also incorporate primary headwater habitat uses which correlate with a second habitat assessment tool developed for smaller streams.
- **Antidegradation**
The draft rules would update the design requirements for new wastewater treatment plants, which would include new criteria for nitrogen and phosphorus limitations. It would move wetlands criteria from the former version to a separate rule proposal and would add a new special high quality waters designation, required to receive special protection.
- **401 water quality certification**
The rules would create a State Water Quality Permit that would replace section 401 water quality certifications. The new permit would allow waters of the state that are not designated as U.S. navigable waters to be protected under Ohio law.
- **Stream mitigation rules**
This new rule would establish a process for mitigating impacts to streams, which is now considered in a case-by-case manner. The protocol would establish categories of stream quality and establish mitigation standards that apply to each level.

On May 2, sessions will cover significant draft changes and additions for all of the rules. This session is designed for municipal officials, utility operators, environmental advocacy groups, corporate environmental staff and lawyers. Presentations will highlight how the rules could affect wastewater treatment plants and businesses. Those wishing to attend should pre-register to attend no later than April 25 by contacting Mary McCarron at (614) 644-2160.

Copies of the [draft rules and associated fact sheets](#) are available on the Ohio EPA website. Comments can be mailed to Ohio EPA's Division of Surface Water, P.O. Box 1049, Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049.

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