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Ohio EPA Proposes Water Quality Use Designations for Selected Streams

Ohio EPA has proposed rules to update beneficial use designations for selected water bodies throughout the state. Changes are proposed for 140 water bodies in seven drainage basins, while verifications of existing uses are proposed for 176 water bodies in eight drainage basins.

A public hearing on the proposed rules is scheduled for 2:00 p.m., February 10, 2011 at the Ohio EPA Conference Center, Room B, 50 West Town Street, Suite 700, in Columbus. All interested persons will have the opportunity to testify or present written comments on the proposed rules. Those attending the public hearing should plan to register at the security desk in the entrance lobby and provide a photo ID.

Beneficial use designations are the water quality goals for lakes, rivers, streams and other water bodies. They include aquatic life habitats (warmwater, coldwater, etc.), recreation (bathing waters, primary contact, secondary contact) and water supplies (public, agricultural and industrial). Specific water quality criteria also are associated with each beneficial use. Together, the uses and criteria are used to determine pollutant limits for wastewater discharge permits.

Changes proposed for water bodies include updating use designations for specific water bodies; adding water bodies that are currently undesignated in rule; verifying existing use designations; and identifying locations of public water supply intakes.

The eight drainage basins affected by the proposed rules include:

- Grand River;
- Sandusky River;
- Huron River;
- Great Miami River;
- Portage River;
- Muskingum River;
- Mahoning River; and
- Mill Creek (southwest Ohio).

A goal of the federal Clean Water Act is to achieve fishable and swimmable conditions in water bodies, wherever attainable. The new information for this rulemaking came from water body sampling conducted by Ohio EPA from 2007 through 2009. The Agency has an ongoing five-year basin monitoring schedule that rotates monitoring efforts throughout the state each year. The monitoring program includes surveys of chemical, physical and biological characteristics to determine the present health and appropriate use for streams and rivers.

At the close of the public comment period, Ohio EPA will review all comments and make any necessary changes to the rules. The rules then will be heard before the legislature's Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR), and finalized accordingly.

Comments on proposed rules are due on February 10, 2011. Copies of the proposed rules and supporting documents may be requested by calling or e-mailing [Chris Skalski](mailto:Chris.Skalski@epa.ohio.gov) at (614) 644-2144, or writing to Ohio EPA, Lazarus Government Center, Division of Surface Water, P.O. Box 1049, Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049. Check [the rules and fact sheet online](#) to access details regarding affected basins.