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Ohio EPA Seeks Comments Concerning Lower Grand River Watershed Report

Ohio EPA has issued a [draft report](#) detailing water quality concerns and recommended improvements in Northeast Ohio's lower Grand River watershed. The Agency is seeking public comments on the draft report before a final document is submitted to U.S. EPA.

The draft total maximum daily load (TMDL) report assesses overall water quality, identifies adverse impacts and outlines the steps necessary to improve watershed health. Once finalized, the TMDL will guide the implementation of local storm water programs and Ohio EPA's issuance of discharge permits.

The lower Grand River watershed – comprising 287 square miles – flows through Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties before draining into Lake Erie near Painesville. The watershed is primarily forested and agricultural with 16 percent being developed. The developed area is concentrated in the western portion of the watershed, while the eastern portion is rural.

Of the 56 sites surveyed for the report, 77 percent met aquatic life use goals and 29 percent met recreation use goals. While much of the Grand River and its tributaries harbor a rich, diverse fish and insect population, there are areas that fail to meet use goals due to pollutants associated with storm water runoff, habitat alteration, *E. coli* bacteria and natural causes.

The draft report recommends the impairments be corrected through a variety of measures including better control of storm water runoff (reducing sediment and nutrient impacts); fixing failing home sewage treatment systems (reducing bacteria); and issuing discharge permits that contain lower effluent limits for *E. coli* and monitoring requirements for total phosphorus.

The federal Clean Water Act requires comprehensive TMDL reports for all impaired water bodies. The TMDL is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body can receive and still meet water quality standards. Ohio is one of a few states to measure the health of its streams by examining the number and types of fish and aquatic insects in the water. An abundance of fish and insects that tolerate pollution is an indicator of an unhealthy stream. A large number of fish and insects that are sensitive to pollution indicate a healthy stream.

The draft TMDL report and supporting documents are available [online](#). Comments concerning the report may be mailed to: Beth Risley, Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water, P.O. Box 1049, Columbus, OH, 43216-1049. They also can be emailed to: beth.risley@epa.state.oh.us. The public comment period ends November 14, 2011.