



Division of Surface Water 2021

Triennial Review Process Fact Sheet

Background

What are Water Quality Standards?

Water quality standards (WQS) are state regulations or rules that protect lakes, rivers, streams and other surface water bodies from pollution. These rules contain beneficial use designations such as warmwater aquatic life habitat, public water supply and primary contact recreation, water quality criteria (numeric levels and narrative statements) protective of the beneficial use designations, and procedures for applying the water quality criteria to discharges. WQS are the foundation for other regulatory actions such as permitting, compliance, enforcement, and monitoring and assessing the quality of Ohio's waters.

Water Quality Standards are comprised of three elements:

- [Use Designations](#) – water supply, recreation, fish and wildlife
- [Water Quality Criteria](#) – narrative and numeric criteria and values derived from methods described in rule
- [Antidegradation Policy](#) – keep clean water clean

Where can I find Ohio's Water Quality Standards?

Ohio's water quality standards are found in [Ohio Administrative Code \(OAC\) 3745-1](#).

What is the Triennial Review?

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's Division of Surface Water is conducting a Triennial Review of Ohio's Water Quality Standards, a process required by the federal Clean Water Act (40 CFR 131.20). This review helps keep states' WQS up to date by integrating the latest science, technology, policy, and federal requirements. The Triennial Review is an essential process in fulfilling the role of the federal Clean Water Act and provides an opportunity for public input to help the Agency determine and prioritize updates to the WQS. It is important to note that while the Triennial Review process helps determine WQS priorities, it is not a rulemaking, rather it helps to guide the Agency for future rulemaking priorities. The Triennial Review has previously been conducted through rulemaking procedures. However, Ohio EPA is decoupling the Triennial Review from the rulemaking process and is implementing the new process described below.

NOTE: *Only topics related to Water Quality Standards are considered for Triennial Review. Topics related to implementation are not considered.*

New Triennial Review Process

Step 1: Internal Review and Draft Prioritization of WQS Projects

The Division of Surface Water will solicit internal Agency staff for input on surface water quality standards that may need review or revision in the next three years. Based on these suggestions, rule review schedules, new information, and program/division needs, the Division will create a draft ranking of WQS updates. This draft ranking will be released for public comment during Step 2.

Step 2: Public Comment Period

Ohio EPA will solicit input from the public on the draft WQS priorities during a 60-day public comment period. The public may also suggest topics not included on the draft priority list. Ohio EPA will hold a public hearing to solicit verbal comments and answer any questions about the WQS priorities or the Triennial Review process.

Step 3: Review and Consideration of Comments Received

Comments received during the public comment period and public hearing will be reviewed and considered by Agency WQS staff when prioritizing WQS updates. A draft workplan for the upcoming three years will be developed.

Step 4: Report Out

The Agency will report out on the final WQS topics for prioritization after it has finalized its review. This document will include:

- A summary of the Triennial Review process
- The final workplan for the next three years
- Responses to comments
 - Please note that the Agency will not be responding to individual comments. Instead, the report will summarize suggested priorities and provide justifications for selected WQS changes and a rationale for those we are not pursuing during this Triennial Review period.
 - This report will be made publicly available and posted on Ohio EPA's Triennial Review webpage. An email notification will be sent to the Ohio EPA DSW's Rulemaking listserv to notify stakeholders of the end of the review process.

Step 5: Work on Priority Projects

Ohio EPA will proceed with rulemaking on the prioritized WQS as outlined in the Triennial Review workplan.