

Water Quality Standards Program

DEP's [Water Quality Division](#), located in the Bureau of Clean Water, develops, reviews and maintains Pennsylvania's [water quality standards](#) (WQS). This includes water uses, numeric and narrative criteria to protect those uses, and antidegradation policies. This division is also responsible for the preparation of this Integrated Report, which includes the development of appropriate monitoring and assessment methodologies to guide impairment listings on the Integrated Report.

To ensure that WQS are continually kept up-to-date, DEP conducts a triennial review of WQS. Every three years the program develops updates to WQS, and the public is given the opportunity to provide feedback. The most [recent Triennial Review](#) contains several changes to 25 Pa. Code Chapter 93, based on the latest scientific information and federal guidelines for criteria development; a few examples of these changes are listed below.

- the aquatic life criteria for ammonia are recommended to be updated to ensure that aquatic organisms such as the fish, mussels and snails that live in Pennsylvania's waters are protected from this pollutant commonly found in agricultural runoff and some industrial and sewage wastes;
- the recreational use criteria during the swimming season is being updated and *E. coli* will replace fecal coliforms as the indicator of fecal contamination;
- the human health exposure factors including typical drinking water intake, fish consumption rate, and body weight have been adjusted to reflect the demographics and diets of Pennsylvanians, allowing DEP to make better criteria calculations for human health protection.
- A number of human health criteria are updated to appropriately limit the human health risk of exposure to these pollutants.

The Environmental Quality Board (EQB) approved the proposed rulemaking for the most recent Triennial Review at its April 18, 2017 meeting. The proposed rulemaking was published on October 21, 2017 in the *PA Bulletin* ([47 Pa.B. 6609](#)) with an extended public comment period that closed on February 16, 2018. DEP and EQB held public hearings during the public comment period in Harrisburg, Wilkes-Barre, Pittsburgh and Norristown. The final rulemaking includes some revisions and clarifications, based on comments received during the comment period, as described in DEP's Response to Comments document. The EQB approved the final rulemaking at their November 19, 2019 meeting, which was published on July 11, 2020 in the *PA Bulletin* ([50 Pa.B. 3426](#)).

In addition to the Triennial Review, the Water Quality Division has recently completed a stream redesignation proposed rulemaking package. Stream Redesignation packages officially change a designated use of a stream. The Class A Stream Redesignation [proposed rulemaking package](#) is the result of stream evaluations conducted by the Department in response to a submittal of data from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). In this proposed rulemaking, the candidate waters qualify for High

Quality (HQ) designated use based upon their classifications as Class A wild trout streams by the PFBC. The EQB approved the final rulemaking at their November 17, 2020 meeting, which was published on July 10, 2021 in the *PA Bulletin* ([51 Pa.B. 3733](#)).