

Existing and Readily Available Data Acceptance Policy

DEP accepts and evaluates existing and readily available data and information from sources outside of DEP for the development of the Water Quality Assessment 305(b) Report and 303(d) list of impaired waters. Since there can be so much variability in monitoring goals, sampling protocols and quality assurance in outside data, DEP categorizes the data/information based on this variability to determine the most appropriate use. DEP has adopted a tiered data acceptance strategy which follows the same general tiered framework as described in Table 1 of the Chesapeake Bay Monitoring Cooperative's [Prioritization Report](#).

Tier 1: Data are generally defined as educational or environmental screening data that has known quality and a study plan but does not follow DEP or EPA quality assurance plans. These data will not be used for regulatory assessment purposes but can be used by DEP to highlight areas of interest for future monitoring efforts.

Tier 2: Data have clearly defined quality assurance plans and procedures and/or clearly follow DEP or USEPA quality assurance plans, but may not have followed approved DEP data collection protocols established in the [Monitoring Book](#). Tier 2 data may not be used for assessment purposes but can be used for other purposes such as trend, performance analysis, and reassessment prioritization.

Tier 3: Data have DEP or USEPA approved quality assurance plans, follow appropriate study designs, and follow DEP data collection protocols in the [Monitoring Book](#). These data will be used for regulatory assessment purposes. Individuals seeking to provide DEP with Tier 3 data must also be trained and audited by DEP staff before submitting data.