

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of Water
Mail Code 4305

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FACT SHEET

PROPOSED WATER QUALITY STANDARDS FOR PENNSYLVANIA

ABSTRACT

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is establishing new water quality standards that are applicable to all surface waters of the United States, including wetlands, within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. EPA is establishing the standards to comply with a federal court order. By taking this action, EPA is proposing to promulgate an antidegradation policy consistent with Federal requirements. The proposed rule will afford the citizens of Pennsylvania the opportunity to designate waters of the Commonwealth into categories which will receive enhanced protection. The rule will also set the "floor" of water quality protection in the Commonwealth.

Federal Authority

Under the federal Clean Water Act, States have the primary responsibility for developing and implementing water quality standards for surface waters within their boundaries. This legislation requires EPA to review and approve or disapprove State-adopted standards and to promulgate standards for States if they do not adopt acceptable water quality standards.

Background

In June 1994, EPA disapproved several aspects of the Pennsylvania's water quality standards. While the State continued to work toward the adoption of approvable water quality standards within a regulatory-negotiation process, EPA was sued by the Raymond Proffitt Foundation to promptly propose federal replacement standards for Pennsylvania, as required by the Clean Water Act. In April 1996, the Federal District Court ordered EPA to satisfy the requirements of the Clean Water Act and to promptly establish standards for Pennsylvania.

Today's Action

In accordance with the court order, EPA is proposing new water quality standards for Pennsylvania in the Federal Register, which would establish a three-tiered antidegradation policy consistent with federal minimum requirements for State water quality standards. The antidegradation policy would: insure that existing instream uses and the level of water quality necessary to maintain those uses are protected for; insure that high quality waters are afforded adequate consideration before lowering of water quality is allowed; and insure that the citizens of the Commonwealth have the opportunity to protect Outstanding National Resource Waters. Pennsylvania protects waters of the Commonwealth through its Special

Protection Waters Program This proposal would insure that Pennsylvania's program fully meets federal requirements.

Additional Information

For additional information, you may contact Mrs. Evelyn S. MacKnight PA/DE Branch, Office of Watersheds, Water Protection Division, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 3 Office, 841 Chestnut Building, Philadelphia, PA 19107 (215) 566-5717.

The entire Federal Register notice may be viewed on the Internet, as follows:
<http://www.epa.gov/EPA-WATER>.