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# **WATER QUALITY CRITERIA AND STANDARDS NEWSLETTER**

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## **MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND THE MEETING ON WATER QUALITY STANDARDS, CRITERIA AND IMPLEMENTATION, INCLUDING WATER QUALITY-BASED PERMITTING**

The next "Meeting on Water Quality Standards, Criteria and Implementation, including Water Quality-based Permitting" will be held August 24-27, 1998. This is the chief vehicle in which EPA communicates technical, policy and scientific information to stakeholder groups about implementation of the water quality standards program. This year's meeting will focus on the Water Quality Criteria and Standards Plan, a vision and strategy for important new initiatives and improvements that need to be made to the water quality standards program to better protect human health and enhance and maintain the quality of the nation's waters. Robert Perciasepe, EPA's Assistant Administrator for Water has been invited to make the keynote address. This year's meeting will feature case studies, break-out sessions and poster sessions at the end of each day. Mark your calendars for this important event!

The session will be held at the Wyndham Franklin Plaza Hotel, Philadelphia, PA. There is no registration fee, but pre-registration is required. EPA will post registration information and a preliminary agenda for the August 24-27 meeting on the Office of Science and Technology's homepage at [www.epa.gov/OST](http://www.epa.gov/OST), the Office of Wastewater Management's homepage at [www.epa.gov/OWM](http://www.epa.gov/OWM) and the Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds homepage at [www.epa.gov/OWOW](http://www.epa.gov/OWOW). You may also contact EPA's contractor, the Cadmus Group at (703) 998-6862 (press 2190 or by e-mail: [mrm98@cadmusgroup.com](mailto:mrm98@cadmusgroup.com)).

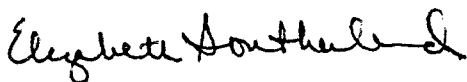
A separate Public Meeting on the Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) on the Water Quality Standards Regulation will be held August 27 and 28 at the Wyndham Franklin Plaza Hotel in Philadelphia. The ANPRM when published in the Federal Register (see related article page four) will solicit public comment on potential revisions to the basic water quality standards program regulation governing state adoption and EPA approval of water quality

standards under Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act. The ANPRM will request comment on changes in policy and guidance that support the regulation.

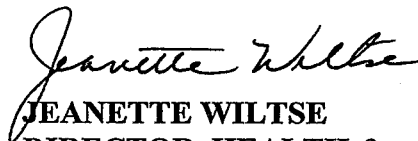
EPA and the Water Environment Federation (WEF) will co-host three public meetings on the ANPRM. The purpose of the public meetings is to provide a structured discourse on the future of the water quality standards regulation and program. This discourse will assist commenters in developing their positions and preparing comments for submittal to the Agency during the 180 day public comment period. EPA's hope is that written public comments will be better developed as a result of the public meetings.

During the three public meetings, nationally recognized resource experts will lead discussions on core issues outlined in the ANPRM and members of the public will be given an opportunity to join in the discussions and ask questions. The format of the three public meetings will be identical. The meetings will be held in different geographic areas of the country to ensure attendance by a large number of stakeholders. EPA is currently identifying locations for the remaining two public meetings. There is no fee to attend the public meetings. Individuals will however, be required to pre-register.

The Office of Science and Technology will post details about the three public meetings on the ANPRM, including registration information on its homepage at [www.epa.gov/OST](http://www.epa.gov/OST). The Water Environment Federation will post information about the public meetings on its homepage at [www.wef.org](http://www.wef.org). You may also contact EPA's contractor, Liz Hiett, Tetra Tech, Inc., at (703) 385-6000, Ex. 168 or on e-mail: [hietli@tetrattech-ffx.com](mailto:hietli@tetrattech-ffx.com).



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## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **WATER QUALITY STANDARDS ACADEMY**

EPA will hold a session of the "Water Quality Standards Academy" for external groups on August 3-7, 1998. The "Water Quality Standards Academy" is a highly structured 5-day training course on all aspects of the water quality standards and criteria program aimed at states, Indian tribes, environmental groups, municipalities, the academic community, industrial groups, federal agencies and other interested parties. There is no registration fee to attend the course. Individuals must, however, pre-register.

Information about this training course appear on the Office of Science and Technology's Home Page at: [www.epa.gov/OST](http://www.epa.gov/OST). You may also contact EPA's contractor: Crystall Smith, Water Quality Standards Academy Coordinator, The Cadmus Group, Inc., at 703-998-6862, Ext. 170 for more information.

## **LIST SERVER & WEBSITE NEWS**

### **NEWSLETTER LIST SERVER**

The Water Quality Criteria and Standards Newsletter is now available electronically. To subscribe to the WQC&S list server, send an e-mail message to [listserv@unixmail.rtpnc.epa.gov](mailto:listserv@unixmail.rtpnc.epa.gov) and type the following command in the body of the message: subscribe SASD-NEWS Firstname LastName (Example: subscribe SASD-NEWS Joan Smith).  
NOTE: The message subject should be blank.

To be removed from the list, send a message to [listserv@unixmail.rtpnc.epa.gov](mailto:listserv@unixmail.rtpnc.epa.gov) and type the following: unsubscribe SASD-NEWS. Contact: Micki Treacy at 202-260-7301 or [Treacy.Micki@epamail.epa.gov](mailto:Treacy.Micki@epamail.epa.gov) for more information.

## **WEBSITE FOR EPA TECHNICAL AND PUBLIC DOCUMENTS**

There is a new EPA website that includes, among other things, the full text of more than 6,000 EPA technical and public documents. From this site, you can view the full text (including graphics) of a document on-line, print, and order copies of all EPA documents that are in the database. The site includes instructions for searching the database by title, EPA document number, keywords, or phrases. The URL for the site is <http://www.epa.gov/ncepihom/>, and you can get to it from the EPA home page by clicking on "Publications."

**WATER QUALITY STANDARDS BRANCH/SASD  
FRED LEUTNER  
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## **WATER QUALITY STANDARDS ACADEMY RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION**

The Environmental Protection Agency's Water Quality Standards Academy received one of the first National Environmental Education Achievement Awards during a ceremony held in Washington, D. C. on November 7, 1997. The award was presented by the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF) to recognize innovative and effective environmental education programs that connect people and their environments in a real and meaningful way. Kevin Coyle, NEETF's President stated that the "National Environmental Education Achievement Awards provide an opportunity to give outstanding organizations such as the Water Quality Standards Academy the recognition they deserve. By honoring these innovative programs, we hope to motivate others to initiate similar programs in their own communities." The award was presented by Mark DeMichele, Chair, NEETF Board of Trustees. Frances A. Desselle, of the Standards and Applied Science Division, accepted the award on behalf of the EPA.

The NEETF Awards are made possible through a grant from the Phillips Petroleum Company to recognize excellence in environmental education in ten different categories: Human Health and the Environment, Clean Water/Safe Drinking Water, Conservation of Natural Resources, Eco-tourism, Multi-Cultural Setting, Social Problem, Integration of Environmental Education into a School System, Improving Community Quality of Life, Business-to-Business Education on Pollution Prevention and Environmental Improvement and Corporate Environmental Education Leading to Increased Profitability. EPA's Water Quality Standards Academy was honored in the Clean Water/Safe Drinking Water category.

In the six years since EPA began the Water Quality Standards Academy, over 1,300 people in state and local agencies, Indian tribes and others have received high quality, intensive training in the basics of water quality standards. By continually upgrading the course materials to reflect the latest EPA programs, by using EPA's most knowledgeable standards experts as instructors, and by focusing on implementation not just theory, the Water Quality Standards Academy has set a high mark against which similar environmental training programs should be measured. There is always a waiting list for these courses. The NEETF is a national leader in bringing objective and scientifically sound environmental education to America, from business leaders and public officials to adult educators and children.

## **CALIFORNIA TOXICS RULE**

On August 5, 1997, EPA published a proposed rule (62 FR 42160) which, when finalized, will establish numeric criteria for priority toxic pollutants in the State of California. This rule (referred to as the California Toxics Rule or CTR) proposes to establish aquatic life criteria for 29 priority toxic pollutants and human health criteria for 65 priority toxic pollutants to replace those rescinded as a result of litigation in California. This rule, when finalized, will fulfill the need for water quality criteria for priority toxic pollutants (as required by Section 303(c)(2)(B) of

the Clean Water Act). Two public hearings on this proposed rule were held in California (one in San Francisco and one in Los Angeles). The public comment period for the proposed rule closed on September 26, 1997.

Currently the Agency is working to develop a final rule. Additionally, the Agency is consulting with the Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. For additional information, contact Diane Frankel at 415-744-2004 or Karen Gourdine at 202-260-1328 or [gourdine.karen@epamail.epa.gov](mailto:gourdine.karen@epamail.epa.gov).

## **ADVANCE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING ON THE WATER QUALITY STANDARDS REGULATION**

EPA has reported in past issues of this newsletter that it is preparing an Advance Notice of Proposed Rule Making on the Water Quality Standards Regulation (ANPRM). At this writing, we anticipate publication of it in the Federal Register in June 1998. EPA had originally expected to publish the ANPRM earlier than 1998. Public interest in development of the ANPRM was so keen, however, that we decided to spend more time meeting and discussing the scope of the ANPRM with representative stakeholder groups. The additional discussions with stakeholders have been invaluable to EPA in narrowing the scope of issues outlined in the ANPRM and sharpening the requests for public comment.

### *What is the ANPRM?*

The ANPRM is a review of the water quality standards regulation (40 CFR 131), the policy and guidance that supports it, and current practice under it. In the ANPRM, EPA discusses the current water quality standards program in detail and outline EPA's current thinking on important new directions in water quality standards, such as incorporation of new science into water quality protection programs (e.g., biological assessments and criteria) and advancement of the watershed management approach to water quality protection, including iterative problem solving. The ANPRM will also serve to educate interested parties on the current water quality standards program, inform the public debate over possible changes in the program, and develop workable proposals. Then, using specific questions, the ANPRM requests public comment on potential changes to the program and regulation, and on current EPA thinking in a number of areas addressed by the current regulation, policy and guidance.

The ANPRM reviews and requests comment on the three major components of water quality standards: water body designated uses, water quality criteria, and the antidegradation policy, as well as in the general implementation policies for mixing zones and independent application of water quality criteria and assessments. In the ANPRM, EPA expresses its view that the water quality standards program should continue to evolve into a program in which: the best possible information on whether designated uses are being attained and how to attain and maintain them is available and used, water quality criteria are scientifically sound and tailored to each

watershed, and national norms of consistency and flexibility in state and tribal water quality standards programs are clear.

One of the main themes of the ANPRM is updating and modernizing water quality standards to that standards may be better implemented on a watershed basis using refined use designations and tailored criteria. New science and assessment methodologies, as well as better data, and new types of data and analysis would need to be used by states and tribes to refine water quality standards in this manner. Efforts to refine the water quality standards program could, therefore, encounter significant resource constraints in some states and tribes. In order for a new, data-intensive, watershed-specific approach to succeed, it must be workable for the states and tribes that will have to implement it. The ANPRM highlights the potential resource challenge for states and tribes and requests comment regarding concerns over resource constraints and ideas for how to address them.

### *Why?*

A rising level of scrutiny of water quality standards is anticipated as EPA, states and tribes work to resolve remaining water quality problems in the nation's waters. These problems are often difficult to assess, define and solve. EPA believes that pressure on the regulatory and policy underpinnings of water quality standards will be increasing, making it imperative to identify where these underpinnings may need to be strengthened, clarified or revised. Through the public discourse the ANPRM will spark, all interested parties will learn about and have the opportunity to evaluate the diverse and creative ways that states, tribes and the public have addressed water quality-related problems through their water quality standards.

### *What Next?*

Once the ANPRM is published in the Federal Register, the public will have 180 days to develop and submit comments. During this period, EPA, together with the Water Environment Federation, will sponsor three public meetings in which focussed, issue-oriented discussions, led by expert panels will take place. In these public meetings, participants will have the opportunity to join the debate, learn about the differing views on each issue, and formulate their comments on the ANPRM. After these public meetings are completed, EPA will request that public comments be submitted to the Agency. The public meetings are planned for July, August and September 1998 and EPA will mail a flyer with the details as soon as the meetings are set.

This important and informed public discourse will be a vehicle to a more informed and effective water quality standards program and ultimately to national water quality improvement. Contact: Rob Wood (202) 260-9536 or Wood.Robert@epamail.epa.gov.

### **WHAT IS THE DESIGNATED USE FOR BEAR CREEK?**

This is a relatively straightforward question that can be fairly difficult to answer. The difficulties that can arise in answering the question include determining which Bear Creek is being discussed, what the most current designated use is, what that use (e.g. fish and wildlife) really means, and what site-specific provisions might apply. Part of the difficulty faced in responding

to such questions is that standards, including uses, can and do change over time as states and tribes conduct their triennial reviews, or as site-specific issues develop. Another challenge is based on determining the areal extent of the standard as it relates to Bear Creek (i.e., all of Bear Creek or only part of it).

The Office of Water has committed to developing a data system that will enable EPA, states, tribes, and the public to know what the designated uses are for the Nation's waters. To that end, the Water Quality Standards Branch will be working with other EPA offices to perform a requirements analysis and to develop a prototype design for a national relational database system for designated uses this fiscal year. A commitment has also been made to work with states and others over the next two fiscal years to ensure that the system functions on the several levels required to meet the needs of all users. All ideas and suggestions are welcome (please contact Jeff Bryan at 202-260-4934).

In addition to the database, new technologies and technically advanced computer software programs improve our ability to respond to many water quality related questions. These technologies include geographic information systems (GIS), georeferencing tools, and reach indexing. A GIS makes it possible to retrieve and manipulate information that has been georeferenced. In water programs, georeferencing tools such as the Reach File (RF) make it possible to conduct more sophisticated analyses based on which sites are located upstream or downstream from other sites. An example of designated use information georeferenced to EPA's RF-3 stream segments (e.g., Bear Creek) is:

Designated Use	Catalog Unit	Segment #	Beginning Mile Point	Ending Mile Point
Recreation	02010402	011017	0.0	7.2

A simultaneous effort is underway to develop a system that will be able to field questions that cover several Office of Water programs. The system would be able to search several databases (e.g., STORET, PCS, 305(b), 303(d), Designated Uses). An example of the type of query this system could accommodate would be, "Show the water bodies with municipal dischargers that have less than fishable/swimmable use designations." (Or with a nonpoint slant... "Show the water bodies without municipal dischargers that have less than fishable/swimmable use designations.")

The goal for these systems is to make water quality standards information accessible to the widest possible audience, including making the system available over the Internet.

Future issues of the Newsletter will provide progress reports on these efforts. We are open to comments and suggestions, and would be particularly interested in working with others who have already started efforts along these lines. Please feel free to call or write Jeff Bryan at 202-260-4934, [bryan.jeffrey@epamail.epa.gov](mailto:bryan.jeffrey@epamail.epa.gov) with your ideas.

**RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT BRANCH/SASD  
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(202) 260-538**

## **EPA'S CONTAMINATED SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

To address the ecological and human health risks that contaminated sediment poses in many U.S. watersheds, EPA announces publication of its *Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy*. Also available, through the Office of Water Docket, is the *Response to Public Comments Document*. The Strategy is an Agency workplan describing actions the Agency believes are needed to bring about consideration and reduction of risks posed by contaminated sediments. In the Strategy, EPA summarizes its understanding of the extent and severity of sediment contamination, including uncertainties about the dimension of the problem and describes the cross-program policy framework in which the Agency intends to promote consideration and reduction of ecological and human health risks posed by sediment contamination.

The Strategy establishes four goals to manage the problem of contaminated sediment, and describes actions the Agency intends to take to accomplish these goals. The goals are: 1) to control sources of sediment contamination and prevent the volume of contaminated sediment from increasing; 2) to reduce the volume of existing (in-place) contaminated sediment; 3) to ensure that sediment dredging and dredged material disposal are managed in an environmentally sound manner; and 4) to develop a range of scientifically sound sediment management tools for use in pollution prevention, source control, remediation and dredged material management.

### **Concerns About Sediment Contamination**

Recent studies of the quality of the nation's lakes, rivers, and bays, and concerns about the economic impacts associated with contaminated fish and disposal of contaminated dredged material make sediment contamination an important issue.

- EPA estimates that 10 percent of the nation's lakes, rivers, and bays have sediment contaminated with toxic chemicals that can kill fish living in those waters or impair the health of people and wildlife who eat contaminated fish (*Listing of Fish and Wildlife Consumption Advisories*, EPA 823-C-97-004, 1997; *The Incidence and Severity of Sediment Contamination in Surface Water of the United States*, EPA 823-R-97-006, 007, 008, 1998).
- Fifteen percent of the nation's lake acreage and five percent of the nation's river miles are under state-issued fish consumption advisories. All of the Great Lakes and a large portion of the nation's coastal waters are also under advisory (*Listing of Fish and Wildlife Consumption Advisories*, EPA 823-C-97-004, 1997).
- Billions of dollars of economic activity are potentially affected by contaminated sediment because of the loss of recreational and commercial fishing and the increased cost of disposing of contaminated material dredged to aid navigation.

### **Why EPA Needs a Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy**



EPA needs an Agency-wide Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy because contaminated sediment is an environmental problem in the nation's water bodies that is not handled by a single EPA office or authority, and the multimedia sources of ongoing contamination and the need to remediate historical contamination require coordinated Agency-wide actions.

## **What the Strategy Will Accomplish**

The *Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy* sets forth an EPA plan to accomplish a number of key actions.

- Agency programs will use consistent and scientifically sound sediment assessment methods in their prevention or remediation processes.
- Agency programs will use the first *National Sediment Quality Survey* Report to Congress (EPA 823-R-97-006) and future biennial updates to target chemicals and watersheds for further assessment, pollution prevention, and remediation.
- Where watersheds are clean, EPA will prevent sediment contamination through point and nonpoint source controls, promoting best management practices, and by testing new pesticides and other chemicals to ensure they will not cause sediment contamination.
- Where watersheds are being contaminated, EPA will take appropriate action through its point and nonpoint source control programs to reduce or eliminate contaminant inputs.
- Where watersheds are already contaminated, EPA will develop risk management strategies and implement source controls, and undertake remediation of contaminated sediment to limit serious risks to human health and the environment and restore designated uses.

## **To Obtain Copies of the Strategy**

Copies of EPA's *Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy* (document number EPA-823-F-98-001) are available from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Center for Environmental Publications and Information, 11029 Kenwood Road, Building 5, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45242. They may be ordered by phone at 800-490-9198; by fax at 513-489-8695; or on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/ncepihom/orderpub.html>. The Strategy can be viewed or downloaded from the Office of Science and Technology's home page, at <http://www.epa.gov/ost>.

## **EPA RELEASES NATIONAL INVENTORY OF CONTAMINATED SEDIMENTS**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, as requested by Congress, released its first-ever national report on the quality of sediments in the nation's rivers and other inland and coastal waterways on January 7, 1998. The report finds that every state has some sediment contamination -- accumulation of toxic chemicals sufficient to pose potential risk to people who eat fish and to fish and wildlife -- and that streams, lakes and harbors can be affected. Sites



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