



Guidance to States, Tribes, and Regions on Priorities for the Water Quality Standards Program for FY 2000-2002

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JAN 27 1999

OFFICE OF
WATER

Dear Colleague:

I am please to transmit the *Guidance to States, Tribes, and Regions on Priorities for the Water Quality Standards Program for FY 2000-2002*. Section 1 lists the priorities by theme and Section 2 by implementing entity. The priorities included in the Guidance are designed to strengthen and modernize the Water Quality Standards program and its use in managing water resources on a watershed basis.

The Water Quality Standards Program priorities support Clean Water Act requirements and *Clean Water Action Plan: Restoring and Protecting America's Waters* directives. Our expectation is that performance agreements between Regional Offices and States and Tribes will reflect the applicable priorities.

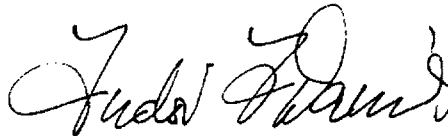
The FY 2000 - 2002 Water Quality Standards program priorities have four organizing themes:

- **STRENGTHEN AND MODERNIZE THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE WATER QUALITY STANDARDS PROGRAM**
- **IMPROVE THE PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING, ADOPTING AND APPROVING WATER QUALITY STANDARDS**
- **STRENGTHEN THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF WATER QUALITY STANDARDS**
- **EXPAND THE WATER QUALITY STANDARDS PROGRAM'S IMPLEMENTATION IN INDIAN COUNTRY**

Fulfilling these priorities is a cooperative effort requiring us to build better working relationships with States and Tribes to improve water quality standards programs and, where necessary, to modify the Water Quality Standards regulation. We recognize that the ambitious priorities may strain resources and, in some instances, necessitate refining the priorities. We pledge to work with you on obtaining additional funding for your water quality standards programs.

We look forward to increased cooperation and mutual support among EPA and States and Tribes in strengthening and modernizing the Water Quality Standards program. Please do not hesitate to give me a call if you would like to further discuss the Guidance or feel free to discuss them with Elizabeth Southerland, Acting Director, Standards and Applied Science Division (202-260-3966).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Tudor T. Davies". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Tudor T. Davies, Director
Office of Science and Technology

Enclosure

Guidance to States, Tribes, and Regions on Priorities for the Water Quality Standards Program for FY 2000-2002

SECTION 1 FY 2000-2002 WATER QUALITY STANDARDS PROGRAM PRIORITIES BY THEME

STRENGTHEN AND MODERNIZE THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE WATER QUALITY STANDARDS PROGRAM

EPA Headquarters and Regional Offices

- Revise the Water Quality Standards Regulation to reflect the ruling in the Alaska Clean Water Alliance v. Clark that State and Tribal water quality standards do not go into effect until EPA approval.
- Propose and finalize revisions to the Water Quality Standards Regulation and guidance, based on an analysis of comments on the July, 1998, Advanced Notice of Proposed Rule Making (ANPRM). Revisions will be designed to modernize the administrative and regulatory framework of the Water Quality Standards Program which:
 - fulfill EPA's time frame mandated by the CWA for the review, approval or disapproval and promulgation of State/Tribal water quality standards along with the concomitant record keeping requirements;
 - encourage innovation while ensuring consistent levels of human health and ecological protection across the nation;
 - allow flexibility in adapting programs to diverse environmental conditions; and
 - provide nationally consistent, predictable bases on which to make determinations under Clean Water Act section 303(c).
- Work together to reduce the backlog of water quality standards disapprovals.

IMPROVE THE PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING, ADOPTING AND APPROVING WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

EPA Headquarters and Regional Offices

- Provide guidance for States and Tribes to use in developing and adopting new or revised water quality standards and for EPA to use in approving these standards. This guidance will include ways for EPA, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) to become involved early in the development of new or revised water quality standards.

- Develop Regional Office agreements with the applicable field offices of the FWS/NMFS (Services) to implement the water quality standards portion of the Memorandum of Agreement between EPA and the Services that we expect to finalize in FY 1999.
- Evaluate, in a timely manner, State and Tribal drafts and final submittals of water quality standards, identify deficiencies, as appropriate, and, where necessary, propose and promulgate federal standards.

States, Tribes and Regional Offices

- Reduce the existing backlog of State and Tribal water quality standards submittals and unresolved disapprovals.
- Work with the Services to facilitate completion of EPA's Endangered Species Act (ESA) obligations.

States and Tribes

- Conduct timely water quality standards triennial reviews.
- Facilitate early agreement in the water quality standards triennial review process on the priorities and schedules (e.g., anticipated water quality standards changes, hearings, final adoption).
- Solicit early participation by the Services in the water quality standards triennial review process to identify and resolve issues related to threatened and endangered species prior to the submittal of new or revised standards.
- Facilitate EPA's review, approval or disapproval and resolution of any identified deficiencies.

STRENGTHEN THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

EPA Headquarters and Regional Offices

- Provide scientific information, tools, guidance and training, in accordance with the vision, priorities and schedule in the *Water Quality Criteria and Standards Plan -- Priorities for the Future* (June, 1998 [EPA 822-R-98-003]) and with the *Clean Water Action Plan: Restoring and Protecting America's Waters* (CWAP) (Washington, D.C., U.S. GPO, 1998). This support includes, for example, expanding the number of contaminants for which EPA develops water quality criteria recommendations, using new technologies and processes to expedite revisions to the criteria, training in using and applying *Revisions to the Methodology for Deriving Ambient Water Quality Criteria for the Protection of Human Health* and new criteria recommendations, revisions to the aquatic life criteria development methodology, completion of the technical and implementation guidance for biocriteria, an integrated approach to assess and control metals in aquatic ecosystems, a sediment modeling toolkit for TMDLs, technical guidance and criteria, where sufficient data are available, for nutrients by type of water body, and the efficacy of risk based indicators of infectious disease for skin, respiratory tract, eye, ear, and throat, etc.

States and Tribes

- Adopt the *Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Bacteria - 1986* and *Recommended National Water Quality Criteria* (www.epa.gov/OST), or scientifically defensible alternatives.
- Review the consistency of State/Tribal methodologies for developing fish consumption advisories with EPA's *Guidance For Assessing Chemical Contaminant Data For Use In Fish Advisories*, vol. 1 and 2 and revise, where appropriate.
- Review and, where appropriate, revise or adopt implementation procedures for:
 - antidegradation policies applicable to point source and polluted runoff discharges;
 - mixing zone policies;
 - narrative criteria to preclude adverse effects to human health, and aquatic life, including Federally listed threatened and endangered species, from toxic pollutants in the water column and in the sediment for toxic pollutants in accordance with EPA's equilibrium partitioning sediment guidelines or a scientifically defensible alternative.
- Review and, if necessary, revise water quality standards to include the protection of threatened or endangered species, identified under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), as part of use designations, aquatic life criteria and applicable implementation procedures.
- Collect, in accordance with national technical guidance, data on which to base scientifically defensible ecoregion and water body-specific numeric nutrient criteria.
- Review the aquatic life use designation system and refine the aquatic life uses with bioassessment information. Protect the refined aquatic life uses by adopting scientifically defensible quantitative biological criteria (either narrative or numeric) that protect each biologically-based aquatic life use. When adopting narrative biological criteria, adopt procedures to translate the narrative into quantitative measures.
- Review and adopt recreational uses which more precisely define the uses to be protected.

EXPAND THE WATER QUALITY STANDARDS PROGRAM'S IMPLEMENTATION IN INDIAN COUNTRY

EPA Headquarters and Regional Offices

- Assist Tribes in completing program authorization and accelerate their adoption of water quality standards or promulgate Federal standards, based on demonstrated Tribal interest (e.g., communication from the Tribal Council or chairman, attendance at the Water Quality Standards Academies, Multi-Regional Workshops, etc.).



SECTION 2
FY 2000-2002
WATER QUALITY STANDARDS PROGRAM PRIORITIES
BY ENTITY

EPA HEADQUARTERS AND REGIONAL OFFICES

Strengthen and modernize the basic structure of the water quality standards Program

- Revise the Water Quality Standards Regulation to reflect the ruling in the Alaska Clean Water Alliance v. Clark that State and Tribal water quality standards do not go into effect until EPA approval.
- Propose and finalize revisions to the Water Quality Standards Regulation and guidance, based on an analysis of comments on the July, 1998, Advanced Notice of Proposed Rule Making (ANPRM). Revisions will be designed to modernize the administrative and regulatory framework of the Water Quality Standards Program which:
 - fulfill EPA's time frame mandated by the CWA for the review, approval or disapproval and promulgation of State/Tribal water quality standards along with the concomitant record keeping requirements;
 - encourage innovation while ensuring consistent levels of human health and ecological protection across the nation;
 - allow flexibility in adapting programs to diverse environmental conditions; and
 - provide nationally consistent, predictable bases on which to make determinations under Clean Water Act section 303(c).
- Work together to reduce the backlog of water quality standards disapprovals.

Improve the process for developing, adopting and approving water quality standards

- Provide guidance for States and Tribes to use in developing and adopting new or revised water quality standards and for EPA to use in approving these standards. This guidance will include ways for EPA, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) to become involved early in the development of new or revised water quality standards.
- Develop Regional Office agreements with the applicable field offices of the FWS/NMFS (Services) to implement the water quality standards portion of the Memorandum of Agreement between EPA and the Services that we expect to finalize in FY 1999.
- Evaluate, in a timely manner, State and Tribal drafts and final submittals of water quality standards, identify deficiencies, as appropriate, and, where necessary, propose and promulgate federal standards.

Strengthen the scientific basis of water quality standards

- Provide scientific information, tools, guidance and training, in accordance with the vision, priorities and schedule in the *Water Quality Criteria and Standards Plan -- Priorities for the Future* (June, 1998 [EPA 822-R-98-003]) and with the *Clean Water Action Plan: Restoring and Protecting America's Waters* (CWAP) (Washington, D.C., U.S. GPO, 1998). This support includes, for example, expanding the number of contaminants for which EPA develops water quality criteria recommendations, using new technologies and processes to expedite revisions to the criteria, training in using and applying *Revisions to the Methodology for Deriving Ambient Water Quality Criteria for the Protection of Human Health* and new criteria recommendations, revisions to the aquatic life criteria development methodology, completion of the technical and implementation guidance for biocriteria, an integrated approach to assess and control metals in aquatic ecosystems, a sediment modeling toolkit for TMDLs, technical guidance and criteria, where sufficient data are available, for nutrients by type of water body, and the efficacy of risk based indicators of infectious disease for skin, respiratory tract, eye, ear, and throat, etc.

Expand the water quality standards program's implementation in Indian Country

- Assist Tribes in completing program authorizations and accelerate their adoption of water quality standards or promulgate Federal standards, based on demonstrated Tribal interest (e.g., communication from the Tribal Council or chairman, attendance at the Water Quality Standards Academies, Multi-Regional Workshops, etc.).

STATES, TRIBES AND REGIONAL OFFICES

Improve the process for developing, adopting and approving water quality standards

- Reduce the existing backlog of State and Tribal water quality standards submittal and unresolved disapprovals.
- Work with the Services to facilitate completion of EPA's Endangered Species Act (ESA) obligations.

STATES AND TRIBES

Improve the process for developing, adopting and approving water quality standards

- Conduct timely water quality standards triennial reviews.
- Facilitate early agreement in the water quality standards triennial review process on the priorities and schedules (e.g., anticipated water quality standards changes, hearings, final adoption).
- Solicit early participation by the Services in the water quality standards triennial review process to identify and resolve issues related to threatened and endangered species prior to the submittal of new or revised standards.

- Facilitate EPA's review, approval or disapproval and resolution of any identified deficiencies.

Strengthen the scientific basis of water quality standards

- Adopt the *Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Bacteria - 1986* and *Recommended National Water Quality Criteria* (www.epa.gov/OST), or scientifically defensible alternatives.
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- Collect, in accordance with national technical guidance, data on which to base scientifically defensible ecoregion and water body-specific numeric nutrient criteria.
- Review the aquatic life use designation system and refine the aquatic life uses with bioassessment information. Protect the refined aquatic life uses by adopting scientifically defensible quantitative biological criteria (either narrative or numeric) that protect each biologically-based aquatic life use. When adopting narrative biological criteria, adopt procedures to translate the narrative into quantitative measures.
- Review and adopt recreational uses which more precisely define the uses to be protected.

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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in financial matters. The text outlines various methods for organizing and storing data, including digital databases and physical filing systems.

2. The second section focuses on the role of technology in modern record management. It highlights how software solutions can streamline processes, reduce errors, and provide real-time access to information. Examples of specific tools and platforms are mentioned, along with their benefits for different types of organizations.

3. The third part of the document addresses legal and regulatory requirements. It explains how record-keeping practices must align with applicable laws and standards to avoid penalties and ensure compliance. Key areas of focus include data privacy, retention policies, and the handling of sensitive information.

4. The final section discusses the importance of training and education for staff involved in record management. It stresses that ongoing learning is necessary to keep up with evolving technologies and regulations. The text provides suggestions for developing training programs and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.