



Wisconsin's Impaired Waters List

In accordance with the requirements of Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) updates biennially the list of waterbodies that are not meeting water quality standards and require the development of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies, which are plans to restore water quality. This list, also known as the Impaired Waters List, is updated to reflect waters that are newly added or removed based on new information or changes in water quality status.

Impaired Waters Listing Process

The assessment and listing process involves a high level of planning and cooperation among WDNR staff and partners. The goal of this effort is to use representative data and sound science to assess the condition of Wisconsin's surface waters. The following is a description of the five major steps that go into assessing our surface waters and developing the list:

1. Preparation of Wisconsin's Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology (WisCALM)

The first step in developing the list is to determine the assessment methods. The methods guidance document (WisCALM) is prepared or refined biennially for each listing cycle. The guidance contains information on standards, data collection, data assessment requirements, and methodologies used to conduct an assessment.

2. Compilation of available data

The next step in identifying impaired waters involves collecting all of the monitoring data available for Wisconsin's surface water resources. WDNR provides an opportunity for the public to submit water quality datasets for inclusion in assessments. Data from citizen stream and lake monitoring networks are also incorporated.

3. Review and use of available data to make assessment decisions

WDNR scientists analyze the quality-assured data for multiple parameters (e.g., fish, macroinvertebrates, phosphorus) and complete draft assessments and identify potential impairments of a water's designated uses (e.g., recreation, fish and aquatic life). These draft assessments are then vetted internally by water resources staff statewide, and may be updated based on the reviewers' local perspectives. In addition to identifying newly impaired waters, WDNR staff evaluates waters currently on the list for potential de-listing.

4. Public notice and review of draft list

Once the draft list is compiled, WDNR holds informational public meetings to answer questions from the public about the listing process, the draft list and impaired waters in general. The draft list and request for comments is publicly noticed in a press release, posted on WDNR's website and emailed to contacts subscribed to receive notification of listing updates. Following the comment period, responses to comments are developed and the draft list is modified as necessary based on the comments received.

5. Preparation and submission of final Impaired Waters List to EPA

For the last step in this process, the final draft Impaired Waters List is provided to the EPA for approval. States are required to submit their final draft list to EPA by April 1, of even-numbered years.

For more information on Wisconsin's Impaired Waters List, please visit our website at:

dnr.wi.gov/topic/ImpairedWaters

Contact Us

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