

## MDEQ Announces Notice of Final Rulemaking for the Triennial Review of Mississippi's Water Quality Standards

The Clean Water Act requires all states to develop, review, revise, and adopt water quality standards every three years known as the triennial review. Water quality standards must include three components: (1) the designated uses for the state's waterbodies, (2) the water quality criteria (narrative or numeric) necessary to protect those uses, and (3) antidegradation provisions to protect water quality.

On June 24, 2021, the Commission on Environmental Quality adopted the proposed amendments to Title 11 of the Mississippi Administrative Code, Part 6, Chapter 2, entitled "Mississippi Commission on Environmental Quality Regulation for Surface Water Quality Criteria for Intrastate, Interstate and Coastal Waters," also known as Mississippi's Water Quality Standards. This action is also reflected in Commission Order No. 7137-21 dated July 6, 2021.

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 49-17-41, within 30 days of the date of the order, any interested person may request that a hearing be conducted regarding the issuance of this order. Such request must be made in writing to Mr. Chris Wells, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, P.O. Box 2261, Jackson, Mississippi, 39225.

Highlights of the revisions adopted by the Commission include:

- The addition of three new waterbody classifications: (1) Outstanding Mississippi Waters, (2) Modified Fish and Wildlife, and (3) Drainage Waters. These additions will allow MDEQ to more accurately classify waterbodies and establish appropriate criteria for these waterbodies. MDEQ is not assigning any waterbodies to the new classifications during this triennial review.
- The addition of the Recreation classification to Bogue Homa, a tributary to the Pearl River located in southern Mississippi. Bogue Homa is one of seven Mississippi Blueways, or water trails, that have been mapped out for recreational canoers and kayakers by the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area (MGCNHA). For more information on Bogue Homa and other Blueways go [here](#).
- The adoption of EPA's most recent recommendations for water quality criteria for the protection of aquatic life from the effects of ammonia toxicity. More information on these criteria can be found [here](#).
- Numeric criteria for the protection of aquatic life have been updated for numerous parameters based on the most current water quality criteria recommendations from EPA.
- Further modifications include the addition of information about developing water quality standards variances and evaluating the reclassification of waterbodies.

If there is no request for a hearing within 30 days of the Order, the next step in the triennial review process is to submit the Commission-adopted revisions of the Mississippi Water Quality Standards to EPA Region 4 for their review.

An electronic copy of the revised Water Quality Standards found on the MDEQ website [here](#).

If you have questions or would like further information, please contact Kim Caviness at [kcaviness@mdeq.ms.gov](mailto:kcaviness@mdeq.ms.gov) or Patrick Felch at [pfelch@mdeq.ms.gov](mailto:pfelch@mdeq.ms.gov).