

## **MDEQ Announces Public Comment Period 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.

Draft modifications proposed as part of the current triennial review 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 detailed information for the development of variances to water quality criteria and evaluating potential reclassification of waterbodies.

The public comment period for the triennial review of water quality standards began on February 11, 2021. Any interested party may submit comments regarding the proposed modifications by submitting the comments in writing by mail to Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Attn: Kim Caviness, P.O. Box 2261, Jackson, Mississippi, 39225, or by email to Kim Caviness at [kcaviness@mdeq.ms.gov](mailto:kcaviness@mdeq.ms.gov) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, March 29, 2021. Members of the public may also present verbal comments at a public hearing.

A public hearing will be held regarding the proposed regulations on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. Due to issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be held telephonically. The public is invited to participate, to ask questions of the staff, to gain information regarding the proposed modifications to the regulations, and to present verbal comments on the proposed regulations. To register in advance to attend the public hearing, send an email to

kcaviness@mdeq.ms.gov or call (601) 961-5062 to leave a voice mail, indicating plans to attend the hearing and contact information (name, telephone number, and email address). A response will be sent to those who register prior to the hearing which contains the call-in telephone number and details needed to access the hearing.

An electronic copy of the proposed water quality standards can be found on the MDEQ website [here](#).

For questions or further information, please contact Kim Caviness at kcaviness@mdeq.ms.gov or Patrick Felch at pfelch@mdeq.ms.gov.