

COMPARISON OF STATE AND FEDERALLY APPROVED WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

Current as of May 23, 2017

Alaska Water Quality Standards (WQS) must be approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) before they can be used for actions regulated under the federal Clean Water Act (CWA).

Discrepancies between state and federally approved standards arise when:

- Alaska adopts a standard and there is a lag time between when it is approved by EPA, or
- EPA promulgates criteria for Alaska and there is a lag time between when it is promulgated and when Alaska adopts a corresponding standard.

The following table summarizes the differences between 2017 Alaska WQS¹ and federally approved statewide WQS for CWA purposes such as APDES² or NPDES³ wastewater discharge permits, Total Maximum Daily Load allocations, and CWA Section 303(d) impaired waterbody listings.

For actions under state regulation only such as wastewater discharges to groundwater, the 2017 Alaska WQS should be used exclusively.

This summary of regulations has been prepared by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and does not constitute an official version of these regulations, nor does it necessarily reflect current law. If a discrepancy is found between this factsheet and the Alaska Administrative Code (AAC), the AAC should be considered the final authority, unless the discrepancy is the result of a technical error in the Code.

WQS	State Only Approved Criteria	Federally Approved State Criteria
Mixing zones (all uses)	2017 Alaska WQS ¹ 18 AAC 70.240	2003 Alaska WQS ⁴ except for 3Q2 flow condition 18 AAC 70.240-270
Natural conditions (all uses)	2017 Alaska WQS 18 AAC 70.010(d)	2003 Alaska WQS 18 AAC 70.235(b)
Residues (all uses)	2017 Alaska WQS freshwater and marine water 18 AAC 70.020(b)(8) and (20)	2003 Alaska WQS freshwater and marine water 18 AAC 70.020(b)(8) and (20)

¹ 2017 Alaska WQS refers to the Department of Environmental Conservation document entitled 18 AAC 70 Water Quality Standards as amended through February 5, 2017 and available at <http://dec.alaska.gov/commish/regulations/pdfs/18-AAC-70.pdf>

² Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

³ National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

⁴ 2003 Alaska WQS refers to the Department of Environmental Conservation document entitled 18 AAC 70 Water Quality Standards as amended through June 26, 2003 and available at <http://www.dec.state.ak.us/water/wqsar/wqs/pdfs/70mas.pdf>

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WQS	State Only Approved Criteria	Federally Approved State Criteria
Fluoride for use (1)(A)(i) (drinking water criteria)	Removed in 2003	1999 Alaska WQS ⁵ 18 AAC 70.020(b) 2.0 mg/L
Odor for use (1)(A)(i) (drinking water criteria)	Removed in 2003	1999 Alaska WQS 18 AAC 70.020(b) 3 threshold odor number
Mercury for use (1)(C) (freshwater aquatic life criteria)	2008 Toxics Manual ⁶ 18 AAC 70.020(b)(11)	EPA's 1995 National Toxics Rule: 60 FR 22229-22237 18 AAC 70.020(b) 2.4 µg/L acute (total recoverable) 0.012 µg/L chronic (total recoverable)
Selenium for use (1)(C) (freshwater aquatic life criteria)	2008 Toxics Manual 18 AAC 70.020(b)(11)	1999 Alaska WQS 18 AAC 70.020(b) Note 5 ⁷ 20 µg/L acute (total recoverable) 5 µg/L chronic (total recoverable)
Carcinogens for uses (1)(A)(i) and (iii), (1)(B)(i) and (ii), (1)(C), (2)(A)(i), (2)(B)(i) and (ii), and (2)(C) and (D)	2008 Toxics Manual	40 CFR 131.36

⁵ *1999 Alaska WQS* refers to the Department of Environmental Conservation document entitled 18 AAC 70 Water Quality Standards as amended through May 27, 1999, and available at http://www.dec.state.ak.us/water/wqsar/wqs/pdfs/18_AAC_70_WQS_May27,1999.pdf

⁶ *2008 Toxics Manual* refers to the Department of Environmental Conservation document entitled Alaska Water Quality Criteria Manual for Toxic and Other Deleterious Organic and Inorganic Substances as amended through December 12, 2008, and available at <http://www.dec.state.ak.us/water/wqsar/wqs/pdfs/Alaska%20Water%20Quality%20Criteria%20Manual%20for%20Toxic%20and%20Other%20Deleterious%20Organic%20and%20Inorganic%20Substances.pdf>

⁷ Adoption by reference of Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Selenium – 1987, EPA 440/5-80-070.