

ANALYTICAL METHODS IN ALASKA WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Division of Water establishes water quality standards (WQS) for state freshwater and marine waters that are protective of human and environmental health. Standards consist of designated uses (water uses that are protected, such as for drinking water), water quality criteria (pollutant limits to protect the designated uses), and antidegradation policy (to prevent unnecessary pollution).

Under the Clean Water Act (CWA) section 304(h), DEC's clean water programs are required to use analytical methods approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA issued a final rule with new and revised analytical methods in 2012.

What are Analytical Methods? Analytical methods are used by laboratories to test water and wastewater for compliance with the CWA. The methods are standardized to ensure quality and repeatability among many different laboratories.

Why amend the Analytical Methods? Analytical methods are updated periodically by EPA and other recognized organizations to use the best available science and technology. These proposed changes to the WQS are intended to update the methods cited at 18 AAC 70 and 18 AAC 83 for consistency with EPA-updated methods and citations. The regulations also include a clarification that sufficiently sensitive methods must be used in permits and applications, which is consistent with standard conditions in existing permits. These are changes to measurement techniques, but the proposed regulations do not include changes to the water quality criteria.

What is different? The updates include new quality assurance/quality control requirements, clarification and corrections to previously approved methods, and revisions to preservation and holding times.

Who will be affected? The proposed updates will allow laboratories and Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES) permit holders to consider the latest technology to produce more accurate results and ensure compliance with CWA standards.

Why Is DEC interested in this issue? DEC wants to ensure that the most recent, scientifically proven methods are used when testing water and wastewater for compliance with water quality standards.

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DEC Water Quality Standards
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<http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wqsar/wqs/index.htm>

DEC Quality Assurance
Website:

http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wgapp/wgapp_index.htm