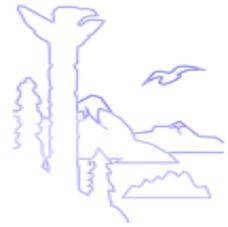


Water Quality Standards



2011-2013 Triennial Review

<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/water/wqsar/trireview/trireview.htm>

Section Manager, Jim Powell

(907) 465-5185

FACT SHEET Outstanding National Resource Waters

Background Information:

Alaska's antidegradation policy (18 AAC 70.015) provides authority to designate waters of exceptional recreational or ecological significance as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs). Currently, no ONRWs have been designated in Alaska. Alaska adopted its current antidegradation policy in 1996.

DEC developed interim antidegradation policy implementation guidance in 2010, which can be found at

http://www.dec.state.ak.us/water/wqsar/Antidegradation/docs/P&P-Interim_Antidegradation_Implementation_Methods.pdf. The interim guidance includes mechanisms to nominate Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs) and designation of these waters under 18 AAC 70.015(a)(3).

As part of further work on the antidegradation implementation methods, DEC will develop more detailed procedures for designating ONRWs. DEC is interested in hearing from the public now, as it may assist in further development of the ONRW designation procedures. In developing the procedures, consideration will be given to methods used in other states, including regulatory and legislatively designated ONRWs.

DEC also invites ONRW nominations as part of the Triennial Review public solicitation process. The process DEC will use to evaluate these nominations has not yet been determined. Consequently, ONRW nominations received will be handled in accordance with the process prescribed by the final antidegradation implementing procedures. When the procedures are finalized, new criteria for designating ONRWs may be applied. This process and the final decision may take several years. There will also be opportunities in the future for the public to nominate additional waters for ONRW designation.

What are ONRWs?:

Under the Clean Water Act, there are several categories (or levels) of protection available for surface waters (rivers and lakes). The highest level of protection, referred to as "Tier 3", applies to waters designated as ONRWs. ONRW status means that no activity is permissible if it will result in lower water quality than already exists in the affected water. Generally, an ONRW designation will prohibit most new wastewater discharge permits or other activities that can

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degrade the quality of the water. ONRWs are often in state or national parks, in refuges, or some other legally protected designation but can be designated in other areas as well.

Criteria needed for nomination:

At a minimum a nomination for an ONRW would contain:

- A detailed description of the waterbody.
- Water quality data to the extent that it is available. This would include rationale to suggest water quality is equal to or better than the water quality standards.
- A detailed description of the recreational and/or ecological values that make the water body unique including economic and cultural factors.
- Any land use designations in the watershed such as national and state park, wilderness area, state or national wildlife refuge etc.

For additional information:

See our website at <http://www.dec.state.ak.us/water/wqsar/trireview/index.htm>.

For more information contact:

Carl Reese

Department of Environmental Conservation

410 Willoughby, Juneau AK 99801

Carl.Reese@alaska.gov; (907) 465-5018