

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Determination that New or Revised Nutrient Water Quality Standards are Necessary for Florida

Summary

EPA has determined that new or revised numeric water quality standards for nutrients are necessary to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act (CWA) for the State of Florida. This determination will support Florida in building upon its already strong record of water quality protection, result in standards protective of applicable designated uses, and further expand and strengthen the numerous partnerships and collaborative projects Florida has led and supported to date.

Background

EPA recognizes Florida as a national leader in its efforts to manage nutrient-related pollution. The state currently has a narrative nutrient criterion in its water quality standards and assessment procedures in the Impaired Waters Rule (IWR) for determining impaired waters based on the narrative criterion. Additionally, Florida implements Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) through Basin Management Action Plans, and has developed and implemented other innovative approaches for addressing point and nonpoint source pollution in the state.

Despite Florida's widely recognized efforts, substantial water quality degradation from nutrient over-enrichment remains a significant challenge in the state and one that is likely to worsen with continued population growth and environmental and land-use changes. EPA has determined that numeric nutrient water quality standards are necessary for the State of Florida to meet the CWA requirement to have standards that protect applicable designated uses. Additionally, numeric nutrient standards will create clear water quality goals and easily measurable quantitative baselines to support

stronger collaboration and more effective partnerships with both point and nonpoint source dischargers of nutrient pollution.

The combined impacts of urban and agricultural activities along with Florida's physical features and important and unique aquatic ecosystems make it clear that the current use of the narrative nutrient criterion alone is insufficient to ensure protection of applicable designated uses. Numeric nutrient standards will strengthen the foundation for identifying impaired waters, preparing TMDLs and developing National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. In addition, numeric standards will support the state's ability to effectively partner with point and nonpoint sources to control nutrients, thus providing the necessary protection for the designated uses of the state's water bodies.

EPA expects to propose numeric nutrient standards for lakes and flowing waters within 12 months, and for estuaries and coastal waters within 24 months. EPA expects to work closely and collaboratively with the State of Florida to ensure that these numeric nutrient standards are protective of applicable designated uses, based on sound scientific rationale, responsive to the specific needs of Florida's waters, responsive to available public and stakeholder input, and sufficient to meet the needs of the state's complete suite of water quality management tools.

For More Information

For further information on EPA's determination that new or revised water quality standards for nutrients are necessary for Florida's surface waters, you may call Christina Jarvis at (202) 566-0537, or you may send an email to jarvis.christina@epa.gov.