

Washington Water Quality Standards

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) proposes to adopt amendments to Water Quality Standards for Surface Waters of the State of Washington - Chapter 173-201A WAC (WQS). Ecology published the rule proposal on its website on February 3, 2016. The rule proposal will be published in the Washington State Register on February 17, 2016.

What is the purpose of this rule proposal?

This rulemaking addresses two specific areas of the WQS:

- 1) Development and adoption of new human health criteria, and;
- 2) Revision and expansion of some of the tools in the standards that help in implementation.

These areas are discussed separately in the following paragraphs.

New Human Health Criteria. Human health criteria are numeric water concentrations for toxic substances that protect people who consume fish and shellfish from local waters and who drink untreated water from local surface waters. These criteria are calculated using a variety of different factors, including chemical-specific toxicity factors for effects to humans, how chemicals move from water into fish and shellfish, as well as other factors. The new human health criteria will be used for federal Clean Water Actions, including: wastewater discharge permits, water pollution identification, and water cleanup plans.

Revised and Expanded Implementation Tools. The WQS contain a number of tools that relate directly to how the criteria are met, and are implemented both in permits and regulatory orders. Ecology is proposing revisions to two of the tools (compliance schedules and variance requirements) that are already in the WQS, and new rule language for intake credits. These tools will be available for use in new and updated wastewater discharge permits.

MORE INFORMATION

The Water Quality Standards are established to sustain public health and public enjoyment of the waters and the propagation and protection of fish, shellfish, and wildlife.

The human health criteria are a set of standards that protect people who consume fish and shellfish, and drink untreated surface water from Washington waters.

To get more information about this rule go to:

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/ruledev/wac173201A/1203inv.html

Contact information:

Becca Conklin
360-407-6413
swqs@ecy.wa.gov

Special accommodations:

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Water Quality at Ecology, 360-407-6600. Persons with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service 711, or TTY 877-833-6341.

What’s “new” about the proposed rule?

Our proposed rule uses a new fish consumption rate of 175 grams/day, and maintains a cancer risk rate of 10⁻⁶ (one-in-one million), which is currently in state rule.

As in the previous proposed rule, the new proposed rule maintains the current level of protection for PCBs and mercury. The proposed criteria for arsenic are based on the federal drinking water standards, similar to what many other Western states use.

Public comment period

The public comment period on the proposed rule is open through **April 22, 2016**. You may give verbal or written comments at one of the in-person public hearings, or by the end of the comment period. If you attend an online webinar, you may give verbal comments, but written comments need to be submitted through one of the following options:

Email: swqs@ecy.wa.gov

Fax: 360-407-6426

Standard mail:

Washington State Department of Ecology
Water Quality Program
Attn: Becca Conklin, Water Quality Standards Coordinator
P.O. Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600.

All comments are due by 5:00 p.m. on April 22, 2016.

Public hearing schedule

We will be holding in-person and online workshops followed by public hearings on this rule proposal. Workshops will consist of a short presentation followed by a question and answer session. The formal public hearing will start after the workshop is over. At that time, we will invite public testimony.

In-Person Hearings	
<p><i>Western Washington - Evening</i></p> <p>Date: Tuesday April 5, 2016</p> <p>Time: 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>Location: Georgetown Campus South Seattle Community College 6737 Corson Ave S – Building C Seattle, WA 98108</p>	<p><i>Eastern Washington - Evening</i></p> <p>Date: Wednesday April 6, 2016</p> <p>Time: 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>Location: CenterPlace Regional Events Center 2426 N. Discovery Place Spokane Valley, WA 99216</p>



Webinar Hearings	
<p><i>Daytime Webinar</i></p> <p>Date: Thursday April 7, 2016</p> <p>Time: 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.</p>	<p><i>Evening Webinar</i></p> <p>Date: Thursday April 7, 2016</p> <p>Time: 6:30 p.m.</p>

Ecology will provide details about these public hearings on its website and through email announcements. For instructions on how to join and participate through the webinar, visit: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/ruledev/wac173201A/1203inv.html.

You may subscribe to receive our emails at <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?A0=ECOLOGY-WATER-QUALITY-INFO>

What documents are available for review and comment?

The following documents are now available for review and comment:

- Proposed rule language
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement prepared under the State Environmental Policy Act
- Overview of the key decisions in rule amendments for human health criteria and implementation tools
- Draft Implementation Plan
- Preliminary Cost-Benefit and Least Burdensome Alternative Analyses
- Small Business Economic Impact Statement

To download these documents visit www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/ruledev/wac173201A/1203docs.html.

Ecology’s response to your comments

All of the comments we receive will become part of the official record. We will publish responses to comments in a document called a Concise Explanatory Statement (CES). The CES is required by the Administrative Procedure Act (RCW 34.05) and is available after the rule is adopted. You will find your name listed in the document with a reference to where, in the document, Ecology responded your comments.

Expected rule adoption date

Ecology intends to adopt the proposed rule on, or after, August 1, 2016.

