

# **Mississippi**

## **Outstanding National Resource Water Guidance**

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**Prepared by Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality**

**Office of Pollution Control**

**Standards, Modeling, and TMDL Branch**

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### **TIER 3 NOMINATION DOCUMENTATION PROCESS**

Nomination for Outstanding National Resource Water (ONRW) to the Commission on Environmental Quality (Commission) will follow the rules established with WPC-1. Each of the points addressed with this guidance document will assist the Commission in making an ONRW determination. Using a weight of evidence approach, the Commission may designate the water body segment as an ONRW based on a combination of the following items.

- The nominated water body segment should be of national significance and be located within a national or state park, national monument, national recreation area, area of critical environmental concern, or has another special use. This should be documented as part of the nomination documentation.
- Location of the surface water (e.g. on federal or state lands such as national parks or national wildlife refuges) must be presented on a United States Geological Survey 7.5 minute topographic map or its equivalent as approved by the Commission showing those surface waters to be nominated including a description consisting of the beginning and ending points, typically the confluence with another stream, of the ONRW determination along with any existing and proposed discharge points including NPDES and NPDES Stormwater Permits within, adjacent to, or above the segment.
- The water body segment must have exceptional water quality as demonstrated by credible chemical and/or biological data, the documented maintenance of pollutant intolerant species, or other data. These data may be collected by other federal and state agencies and are available through US EPA STORET database. The nomination should detail the existing uses and all known water quality data for the water segment and watershed. If adequate data are unavailable, additional studies may be required by the Commission prior to consideration.
- The water body segment is of exceptional recreational significance because of its unique attributes as demonstrated by detailed information highlighting economic benefits, number of users relative to other similar waters, and exceptional water quality demonstrated by credible water quality data. Descriptions of general land uses and specific land uses adjacent to the surface water for which the nomination is proposed as well as the general physical characteristics of the surface water including width, depth, bottom composition, and slope should be included in the nomination.
- The USGS gauge system can provide data regarding the frequency of occasions when there is no natural flow in the surface water, and the 7Q10 and harmonic mean flow values for the surface water and adjacent surface waters. The nomination should include an assessment of the existing and potential aquatic life habitat in the surface water under consideration and the adjacent upstream

surface waters. A summary of the existing designated use can be found in Mississippi's Water Quality Standards, WPC-2 and included with the nomination documentation.

- The existing aquatic life shall be documented including the occurrence of individuals or populations, indices of diversity and well-being, and abundance of species of any unique native biota. The segment could support threatened or endangered species or provide critical habitat for a federally threatened or endangered fish, mussel, or aquatic invertebrate species. The US Fish & Wildlife Service should prepare a letter of support for the proposed classification.
- A documented rationale should be included as to why the water qualifies for the nomination; and the rationale used to support the national significance of the water. The water is highly aesthetic; has archeological, cultural, or scientific importance; or provides a special educational opportunity.
- The social and economic impact that will result from Tier 3 antidegradation protection includes a listing of the persons, businesses, and organizations likely to be impacted by the change in Tier designation. Current users, downstream users, and potential future users of the water body and the surrounding land are the types of persons, businesses and organizations likely to be impacted by the change in designation. Those potentially impacted include cities, townships, permit holders, environmental organizations, and recreational users. Those impacted must be notified by the nominating party and a petition provided to the Commission indicating their support for the ONRW classification.

If the Commission determines that the classification of a water body segment as an ONRW may be appropriate based upon the criteria described above, the Commission will then consider the following factors when making a decision whether to classify a water body segment as ONRW:

- Whether there is the ability to effectively manage the ONRW or ONRW and its watershed to maintain and protect existing water quality;
- The social and economic impact that will result from Tier 3 antidegradation protection;
- Public comments in support or opposition to the ONRW classification;
- The consistency of an ONRW classification with applicable water quality management plans;
- Any other factors the Commission considers relevant when making a decision whether to classify a water body segment as ONRW.

If the Commission concurs with the nomination of an ONRW classification, the Commission shall hold at least one public meeting in the local area of a nominated ONRW to solicit public comment. The nomination and all other information or input collected during the nomination and consideration process will be made part of the public

record and provided to the local land owners adjacent to the proposed segment. Any changes to the list of ONRW waters (addition or deletion of waters) need to proceed through the rule making process as prescribed in the Administrative Procedures Act.

### **Sources of the data required for the nomination documentation**

USGS 7.5 minute topographic maps can be ordered online from Mississippi Office of Geology List of Publications the DEQ website at:

[http://www.deq.state.ms.us/MDEQ.nsf/page/geology\\_list\\_of\\_publications](http://www.deq.state.ms.us/MDEQ.nsf/page/geology_list_of_publications)

Proposed discharges to surfaces waters are found on the MDEQ website. The links are on the webpage of the Office of Pollution Control's Environmental Permits Division. Links to Permit Applications Received and Online Public Notices are located on this webpage.

Issued permits can be found using the enSearch Online service offered through MDEQ. The public can search for permit records by city, county, or Agency Interest.

Existing uses are defined in the Water Quality Standards Handbook located on MDEQ's website.

Water Quality Data are available though the EPA database STORET.

General and Specific land uses can be found using GIS, Google Earth, or BING Maps.

Designated uses for the water body can be found in the State of Mississippi Water Quality Criteria for Intrastate, Interstate, and Coastal Waters (WPC-2) on MDEQ's website.

Stream physical parameters can be found from the National Hydrology Dataset and from the USGS available on the USGS website in the National Water Information System: Web Interface <http://www.waterdata.usgs.gov>

Water data reports are available on the USGS website <http://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov> .

The Mississippi Natural Heritage Program (NHP) maintains a database that is used to track species populations over time. Online data are available and there is an online data request form for further information.

Nature Serve is a database that provides information about the distribution of native US fishes by watershed located at <http://www.natureserve.org/getdata/animaldata.jsp>

MDEQ's most recent 305b and 303(d) reports are available on MDEQ's website.