

Proposed Amendments to Mississippi Commission on Environmental Quality Regulations for Water Quality Criteria for Intrastate, Interstate, and Coastal Waters 11 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 6, Ch. 2

Presented to the Commission
June 24, 2021

MDEQ is required by the Clean Water Act to routinely review and update the state's water quality standards document in a process known as the triennial review. The last modifications to Mississippi's Water Quality Standards were adopted by the Commission on February 25, 2016 and were approved by EPA on January 18, 2017.

Draft Revisions to the State's Water Quality Standards have been made as part of Mississippi's current triennial review process.

Proposed amendments include:

- Addition of 3 new waterbody classifications: Outstanding Mississippi Waters, Modified Fish and Wildlife, and Drainage Waters (No waterbodies are being assigned to these classifications at this time.)
- Addition of language related to requirements and procedures for water quality standards variances and revisions to waterbody classifications/designated uses. Updates to aquatic life criteria for various pollutants
- Aquatic Life Criteria Updates including updates to ammonia criteria for protection of aquatic life in freshwater
- Site-Specific Criteria for Selenium within Little Bywy Creek, Middle Bywy Creek, and Big Bywy Creek
- Bogue Homa (Pearl River Basin) reclassified to Recreation

A 45-day public comment period for the draft modifications was held from Thursday, February 11 until Monday, March 29, 2021. A public hearing was also held on Tuesday, March 30, 2021. A request was submitted by the Mississippi Manufacturers Association on March 29, 2021 requesting a 10-day extension to the public comment period regarding the proposed amendments. The extension request was granted, and written comments were accepted until Friday, April 9, 2021. MDEQ received expanded comments from one entity (Healthy Gulf) during the extended comment period. No additional comments were received during extension.

Comments were received from a total of six entities during the public comment period including:

- Mississippi Forestry Association,
- Mississippi Manufacturers Association
- Mississippi River Collaborative
- Weyerhaeuser NR Company (Magnolia, MS)
- Tulane Environmental Law Clinic
- Healthy Gulf

MDEQ staff have reviewed, evaluated, and responded to these comments. The redline version of the Water Quality Standards outlining the proposed revisions has been provided to the Commission for review along with all comments received and the responsiveness summaries. Minor edits have been made to the proposed modifications in response to comments.

Staff requests the Commission adopt the proposed amendments to Regulations for Water Quality Criteria for Intrastate, Interstate, and Coastal Waters as presented.