SCWQA

Water Quality Through Sound Science

October 26, 2026

By Electronic Mail (wqs@des.sc.gov)

Andrew Edwards
South Carolina Department of Environmental Services
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

RE: SCWQA Comments on 2026 Triennial Review Draft Revisions

Dear Mr. Edwards:

I write today to share additional comments from the South Carolina Water Quality Association (SCWQA) on the Department's Triennial Review of water quality standards. The SCWQA comprises local governments, wastewater authorities, and leading wastewater engineering firms from across the state. SCWQA members strive every day to protect public health and the environment in an affordable and cost-effective manner. We appreciate the opportunity to engage with the Department on these issues and thank the Department for its efforts to solicit feedback from the public through hearings and written comment periods.

Significant Figures Associated with Dissolved Oxygen Criteria

As discussed in the Department's' third stakeholder meeting, we appreciate the Department's clarification that changes to the number of significant figures in dissolved oxygen water quality criteria (i.e. from one to two significant figures, for example 5 to 5.0) will not result in any changes to TMDLs and permit effluent limits because the Department has always in practice interpreted the dissolved oxygen criteria as containing two significant figures. We thank the Department for its clear statements and confirmation that this change will not alter existing practices.

DES Should Refrain from Including Flow or Water Quantity in Water Quality Standards

DES should focus on water quality, rather than water quantity or flow, requirements in South Carolina's water quality standards. The federal Clean Water Act expressly reserves water quantity to the States in 33 U.S.C. § 1251(g). If DES includes the proposed flow or water quantity language in its surface water quality criteria in E.20 and antidegradation rules in D.1.b, it invites EPA to assert itself into state water *quantity* decisions under the guise of federal water *quality* regulation.

DES could easily lose control over these provisions and effectively give EPA control of state surface water quantities. For this and other reasons, other states do not include flow or quantity considerations within state water quality standards.

While SCWQA understands the need to study and ensure sufficient water quantities exist in the surface waters of the state, SCWQA believes the General Assembly's and the WaterSC stakeholder group's ongoing efforts are the more appropriate mechanisms to do so rather than the Department's proposed changes. The South Carolina General Assembly established a regulatory framework to govern surface water quantities in the South Carolina Surface Water Withdrawal, Permitting Use, and Reporting Act, S.C. Code § 49-4-10 *et. seq*. In 2024, the General Assembly created a Surface Water Study Committee to study the state of surface water in South Carolina and any necessary additions or changes to existing law. The Governor then ordered the Department to assemble a diverse group of stakeholders to draft a State Water Plan to inform any recommendations made to the General Assembly. Both of these processes continue to evaluate surface water in the state while promoting public participation and the thoughtful management of surface waters in South Carolina.

We thank the Department again for the opportunity to provide public comments and to participate in hearings during the Triennial Review process. We are happy to discuss any of the issues raised in this letter or during the Triennial Review.

Sincerely,



F. Paul Calamita
General Counsel

C: SCWQA Members