SC DEPARTMENT of ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

EPA's 2015 Water Quality Standards Regulatory Revisions (EPA 820-F-15-004)

On August 5, 2015, the EPA Administrator signed a final rule updating six key areas of the federal water quality standards (WQS) regulation which helps implement the Clean Water Act (CWA). The final rule was published in the Federal Register on August 21, 2015 (80 FR 51019). The results are included in 40 CFR 131. The final revisions provide a better-defined pathway for states and authorized tribes to improve water quality, protect high quality waters, increase transparency and enhance opportunities for meaningful public engagement at the state, tribal and local levels. The previous regulation had been in place since 1983.

One aspect of this final rule clarifies the triennial review requirements to explain the role of new or updated CWA section 304(a) criteria recommendations in the development of WQS by states and authorized tribes, and to describe the applicable WQS that must be reviewed triennially, promoting public transparency on how states and authorized tribes consider such criteria recommendations during triennial reviews.

As a result of this rule, if the Department chooses not to adopt new or revised criteria for any parameters for which EPA has published new or updated CWA section 304(a) criteria recommendations since May 30, 2000, then the Department must explain its decisions when reporting the results of its triennial review to EPA. The following list includes those parameters for which EPA has published new or revised CWA section 304(a) criteria that the Department has not yet adopted into its water quality standards.

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1. Aquatic Life Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Ammonia – Freshwater (EPA 822-R-13-001)
2. Human Health Ambient Water Quality Criteria: 2015 Update (EPA 820-F-15-001)
3. Aquatic Life Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Selenium – Freshwater (EPA 822-R-16-006)
4. Aquatic Life Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Aluminum (EPA 822-R-18-001)
5. Freshwater Aquatic Life Ambient Water Quality Criteria and Acute Saltwater Aquatic Life Benchmark for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) (EPA-842-R-24-002)
6. Freshwater Aquatic Life Ambient Water Quality Criteria and Acute Saltwater Aquatic Life Benchmark for Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) (EPA-842-R-24-003)