



News Release

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ARKANSAS WATER QUALITY STANDARDS TO BE DISCUSSED AT SIX MEETINGS

The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality will hold a series of six public informational meetings in October and November to discuss its current review of the Arkansas Water Quality Standards (Regulation No. 2 of the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission) and provide an opportunity for interested citizens to learn about and discuss water quality issues related to possible revisions in the standards. The meetings will be preceded by an Oct. 1 briefing on water quality issues by ADEQ staff for interested members of the news media.

The schedule for the six public informational meetings is as follows:

- Fayetteville, Oct. 4, Clarion Inn convention center, 1255 S. Shiloh Drive.
- Mountain Home, Oct. 9, Ramada Inn convention center, 1127 U.S. Highway 62.
- Hope, Oct. 16, University of Arkansas Community College auditorium, 2500 S. Main.
- Pine Bluff, Oct. 18, Ramada Inn convention center, No. 2 Convention Center Plaza.
- Jonesboro, Nov. 1, Jonesboro High School auditorium, 301 Hurricane Drive.
- Little Rock, Nov. 6, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service auditorium, 2301 S. University.

All informational meetings will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The Oct. 1 news media briefing, which also will be open to the public, will begin at 10:00 a.m. in the ADEQ's Building G Training Room, located within the Arkansas State Police Headquarters, No. 1 State Police Plaza, in Little Rock. Persons planning to attend the briefing should arrive a few minutes before its scheduled start to allow time to obtain a visitor's pass to the State Police building.

The ADEQ has begun the process of reviewing the water quality standards for possible revisions, which would have to be approved by the PC&E Commission. Every three years each state is required to conduct such a review.

The public meetings are designed to provide interested persons with background information on topics such as the reason for having water quality standards; what the standards

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are designed to accomplish; what elements comprise the current standards; and what issues are under consideration by the ADEQ during its current review. Citizens can use the meetings to ask questions or make suggestions concerning the water quality standards, or simply as a starting point for preparing formal comments for submission later. An official comment period will be established sometime next year, after the ADEQ completes its proposed revisions to the standards. That draft document will be offered for formal public comment at one or more public hearings to be scheduled by the PC&E Commission.

Representatives of the ADEQ's Water Division will begin each meeting with a presentation outlining the state water quality standards and noting water quality issues being reviewed by the Department which might result in proposed changes to the current Regulation No. 2. After the presentation, members of the public will have the opportunity to speak.

In addition, ADEQ staff from other divisions plan to attend to provide information to individuals who have questions or comments on environmental issues not related to the water quality standards review. Representatives of other government and private-sector organizations which are interested in water quality issues will be invited to attend the meetings and set up information tables in areas adjacent to the meeting rooms.

The six public meetings will be informal, and although comments made during the meetings or submitted in writing afterward will be considered by the ADEQ staff in developing a draft regulation, those comments will not be included in the formal record to be made as part of the public participation process for the draft regulation. A formal comment period for that process will begin with the publication of a legal notice next year which will announce the availability of the proposed regulation for public review, schedule one or more public hearings for submitting oral and written comments on the proposal, and establish a deadline for submission of all written comments.

Tentatively, the ADEQ plans to have a working draft of proposed changes to Regulation No. 2 by the spring of 2002, followed up by a final draft which would be announced in a legal notice that summer. If that schedule is met, one or more public hearings would be held during the fall of 2002, with a Commission vote on the proposal coming during the latter part of the year, or possibly early in 2003.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would eventually have to approve any changes to the Arkansas Water Quality Standards before they could be implemented.