

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is the 303(d) List?**

The federal Clean Water Act requires Arkansas to submit a list to EPA every two years on the quality of water in the state. This list is a tool to enable ADEQ to make science-based priorities for addressing water quality issues and in implementing regulatory controls in Arkansas's waters.

- **How is the list developed?**

ADEQ considers all readily available data to determine the status of water quality in Arkansas and to identify waterbodies that fail to meet standards defined in Arkansas's Regulation No. 2. Sections of waterbodies failing to meet Reg. 2 water quality standards are referred to as "impaired." Segments of waterbodies that are impaired, but can be addressed through comparable, already-established standards are placed in Category 4. Segments of waterbodies that are impaired and require a Total Maximum Daily Load (regulatory restriction) are included in the 303(d) List of Category 5 Impaired Waterbodies.

- **What is "impairment"?**

An impairment refers to a situation when the amount of a pollutant or other water quality measures fail to meet the state's standards. Impairments are identified by parameters such as bacteria, turbidity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, or pH, among others. One section of a waterbody may be considered impaired for multiple parameters based on available data.

- **How are impairments identified?**

ADEQ determines impairments by comparing data to Arkansas's water-quality standards in accordance with the Assessment Methodology. The Assessment Methodology is the guidance document that outlines the steps for analyzing data in order to make impairment determinations.

- **What is an Assessment Unit?**

Waterbodies are divided into Assessment Units (AU) for purposes of analyzing available data. AUs organize waterbodies into smaller sections with similar environmental conditions. AU impairments are identified following the procedures established in the Assessment Methodology.

- **Is the entire river impaired?**

The list includes specific AUs reflecting impairments only at that particular point or stretch in the waterbody. This enables ADEQ to determine an appropriate response to addressing the impairment and to make resource allocation decisions appropriate for that stream segment.

- **What does the “List” include?**

Following assessment of water-quality data, AUs are placed in one of five categories. Impaired AUs are placed in Categories 4 or 5 but only AUs placed in Category 5 comprise the “303(d) List.”

- **Category 1** AUs are meeting all water quality standards for all designated uses.
- **Category 2** includes waters meeting most designated uses, but not all.
- **Category 3** is appropriate when data are insufficient to make an impairment determination.
- **Category 4** recognizes that comparable, already-established, and state-controlled measures to address the water-quality issues are already in place for the impaired AU and a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) does not need to be developed.
- **Category 5** includes impaired AUs that may require the development of a TMDL. This list is subdivided by priority for the agency to use when developing TMDLs.

- **Are there any concerns about coming into contact with an impaired waterbody?**

The impairments indicate trends over time as opposed to acute or emergency situations. The safety of human contact with water in popular swimming areas is monitored by the Arkansas Department of Health. In addition, some recreational waters are monitored by other entities (such as the National Park Service for the Buffalo National River or state agencies managing waterbodies located within state parks), and appropriate restrictions and/or signage is handled by those respective authorities.

- **What happens after the public comment period?**

Following a review of public comments, ADEQ staff will submit the final proposed 303(d) List to EPA as part of the 305(b) Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report.

- **Where can I find more information about the 303(d) List?**

The List can be accessed on the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality website at www.adeq.state.ar.us/water/planning/integrated/303d/list.aspx.

- **How can I voice my opinion about the 303(d) List?**

Comments from the public can be made by sending emails to WaterbodyComments@adeq.state.ar.us. Additionally, a public hearing will be held from 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m. on Friday, August 17, 2018, at ADEQ’s headquarters at 5301 Northshore Drive in North Little Rock, Arkansas. ADEQ requests that a paper copy of all oral comments be submitted either at the public hearing or any time during the comment period.