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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
DIVISION OF WATER MONITORING AND STANDARDS

Request for Comments on the Draft 2016 Integrated Water Quality Assessment Methods Pursuant to Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act at 33 U.S.C. 1313(d) and the New Jersey Water Quality Management Planning Rules at N.J.A.C. 7:15

Public Notice

Take notice that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (Department) is seeking public comment on the draft *2016 Integrated Water Quality Assessment Methods* (Methods Document), which has been posted on the Department's Web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/wms/bears/assessment.htm>. The draft 2016 Methods Document provides a description of the methodology used to develop a statewide List of Water Quality Limited Waters (303(d) List) pursuant to Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act at 33 U.S.C. 1313(d), the New Jersey Water Quality Planning Act at N.J.S.A. 58:11A-7, and the Water Quality Management Planning rules, N.J.A.C. 7:15.

The Methods Document includes a description of the data quality requirements and scientific methods used by the Department to evaluate surface water quality data and assess compliance with surface water quality standards and support of designated uses, as well as the rationale for placement of pollutants and assessment units on the 2016 303(d) List. The Methods Document also includes information regarding the placement of assessment units and designated use assessment results on the 2016 Integrated List of Waters (Integrated List). The Department is required to seek public comment on the Methods Document pursuant to the Water Quality Management Planning rules, N.J.A.C. 7:15.

Interested persons may submit comments on the draft 2016 Methods Document by email to kimberly.cenno@dep.nj.gov or by regular mail to Kimberly Cenno, Section Chief, New Jersey

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Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Water Monitoring and Standards, Bureau of Environmental Analysis, Restoration and Standards, P.O. Box 420 (Mail Code 401-04I), 401 East State Street, Trenton, New Jersey, 08625-0420. **All comments must be submitted by March 17, 2016**, which is 30 days after the date of publication in the New Jersey Register. A hard copy of the draft 2016 Methods Document may be requested by contacting the Bureau of Environmental Analysis, Restoration and Standards at 609-633-1441.

After review and careful consideration of comments received, the Department will make any necessary revisions and finalize the 2016 Methods Document, which will then be used to develop the draft 2016 303(d) List, the draft 2016 Integrated List, and other elements of the 2016 Integrated Water Quality Assessment Report (Integrated Report). The final 2016 Methods Document will be published on the Department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/wms/bears/assessment.htm> prior to or concurrent with publication of the draft 2016 303(d) List for public review and comment.

All states are required pursuant to Section 305(b) of the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. 1315(b)) to biennially report to USEPA on the status of principal waters in terms of overall water quality and support of designated uses (Integrated List of Waters, or "Integrated List"). States are also required to develop a list of waters that currently do not meet, or are not expected to meet, applicable water quality standards after the implementation of technology-based controls. This list is known as the 303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Waters or "303(d) List". The 303(d) List includes a priority ranking for scheduling TMDLs, as well identifying TMDLs expected to be completed in the next two years. These two lists, along with strategies to maintain and improve water quality and other pertinent information, comprise the Integrated Water Quality Assessment Report (Integrated Report).

The Integrated Report identifies where regulatory and other actions have been successful in restoring water quality, where water quality improvement is needed, where high quality waters are threatened and/or need protection, and where further study and/or research is needed to

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address unresolved water quality issues, such as nutrient impacts on aquatic life uses. These results provide a sound scientific foundation to inform and prioritize the State's water regulatory and management programs. This state-scale water quality information is required by the CWA to develop the overall national scale assessment of water quality. The scientific protocols and methods used to assess data and develop the 2016 Integrated Report are explained in the draft 2016 Methods Document.