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David L. Gadis, Chief Executive Officer
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY | 1385 CANAL STREET, SE | WASHINGTON, DC 20003

September 6, 2023

Rebecca Diehl
Water Quality Division
1200 First Street, NE, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20002,

Via e-mail: *rebecca.diehl@dc.gov*

SUBJECT: 2021 Triennial Review of Proposed WQS
DC Water Comments

Dear Ms. Diehl:

The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC Water) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the "Water Quality Standards and Ground Water Standards Update for the Triennial Review 2021". Please find our comments below.

1. Turbidity
   The current water quality standards provide for a "Turbidity Increase above Ambient" of 20 nephelometric turbidity units (NTU) for all receiving water classes. The triennial review proposes to define ambient turbidity in a new footnote "f" as follows:

   - 6 NTU for the Potomac River east of the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge and Anacostia River and its tributaries (Coastal Plain)
   - 1 NTU for the Potomac River northwest of the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge and its tributaries, and Rock Creek (Piedmont)

   Our interpretation of the above is that the resulting water quality standard is the new ambient background plus the increment in the standard as follows:

   - Coastal Plain: 6 + 20 = 26 NTU
   - Piedmont: 1 + 20 = 21 NTU

The socio-economic, institutional, technological, and environmental (SITE) study that accompanies the proposed revision indicates the definition of ambient conditions was based on a statistical review of historical data, which are summarized in the SITE document as shown in table below:

Tributary	Region	NTU Average	NTU for Given Percentile				
			10th	25th	50th	75th	90th
Mainstem	Coastal Plain	19.7	4.9	7.7	12.4	20.0	35.0
	Peidmont	14.5	1.5	3.0	5.6	11.8	25.0
Tributary	Coastal Plain	15.8	0.7	2.8	5.3	12.6	29.8
	Peidmont	5.5	0	0.2	0.5	2.4	7.9

The following are comments:

- Actual ambient levels in the data set are significantly higher than the proposed ambient levels in the standard. As an example, the 25th percentile in the data for the Mainstem, Coastal Plain is 7.7 NTU, whereas the proposed ambient background is 6 NTU. The proposed ambient turbidity is exceeded more than 25% of the time. The actual ambient is *double* the proposed ambient standard more than half the time (12.4 NTU actual vs 6 NTU ambient at 50th percentile).
- Turbidity in all receiving waters increases substantially in wet weather. DC Water has observed this as part of in-stream post construction monitoring where TSS levels regularly increase from 1 to 5 mg/L in dry weather to more than 30 to 40 mg/L at the DC/MD boundary in the Anacostia River in wet weather. It appears the analyses of appropriate ambient conditions do not include a separate assessment for wet weather events.
- The SITE document which analyzes impacts of the proposed changes states, "because the proposed revisions only modify existing water quality criteria, they are not expected to require the implementation of major new water or discharge management strategies". DC Water is responsible for discharges from the combined sewer system and Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant. Discharges from the combined sewer system are being controlled, <u>but not eliminated</u>, via the Clean Rivers Project which is being implemented pursuant to a federal consent decree. Discharges from the combined sewer system will still occur, and EPA and the District have determined that these discharges comply with water quality standards, subject to post construction monitoring. The SITE document does not address changes to the CSO controls that may be required by establishing ambient levels at such low values and establishing ambient levels without considering the impact of wet weather events. The District of Columbia may also be impacted for similar reasons for discharges from the MS4 system, for which the District is responsible.

We recommend not establishing a fixed numeric ambient turbidity until an analysis of wet weather conditions separate from dry weather is performed and until the effects of such an analysis on the CSO program and the District's MS4 program are adequately considered in the SITE document. If that is not possible, then we recommend increasing the ambient background to a level that is consistent with the data set and indicating in footnote "f" that it applies to dry weather conditions only.

2. Mercury
   The preamble to the proposed water quality standards states, "*DOEE is proposing to add mercury to the list of metals requiring an EPA conversion since the numeric criteria were established for total recoverable metals but are being used for dissolved metals. The failure to include mercury in the original table was an oversight that is being corrected*…"

   During the August 23, 2023 public hearing, the presentation indicated that the mercury change described above is incorrect and that instead hexavalent chromium would be deleted from Section 1105.10. We reserve the right to comment on this after seeing the final proposed water quality standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important matter. We appreciate DOEE's consideration of our comments. If there are any questions or additional information required, please contact Moussa Wone, at 202-787-4729 or Moussa.Wone@dcwater.com.

Sincerely,

mwone 09.06.2023

Moussa Wone
Vice President
DC Clean Rivers Project

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