ALASKA CLEAN WATER ACTIONS
POLICY
DELINEATING WATERBODIES

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this document is to provide the overall guidance and the process used to delineate waterbodies (segmenting) as a part of the Alaska Clean Water Actions (ACWA) waterbody nomination or grant evaluation process. While the public may nominate entire watersheds or entire river or lake systems, entering such waters into the ACWA database requires a more specific, limited waterbody segment or segment of concern. This document guides members of Alaska's Clean Waters Action team on the segmenting process. All State of Alaska staff that rank waters for the Alaska Clean Water Actions should use this guidance.

II. GENERAL GUIDELINES

The physical boundaries (beginning and end points) of a segment should be defined in such a manner that a technically valid assessment of each and every segment can be made. The individual size of a segment will vary based upon methodologies. Segments should, however, be larger than a sampling station but small enough to represent a relatively homogenous parcel of water (with regard to hydrology, land use influences, point and nonpoint source loadings, etc.).

Waterbodies should be partitioned to represent homogeneity in physical, biological or chemical conditions. Partitioning should reflect prior knowledge of factors such as flow, channel morphology, substrate, riparian condition, adjoining land uses, confluence with other waterbodies, and potential sources of pollutant loadings (both point and nonpoint). Other factors may include the following:

1. The expected natural variability of the measured parameter of concern;
2. The type of water (e.g., river/stream, tidal wetland, bay/inlet, groundwater);
3. Time of travel of a parcel of water in the waterbody or segment or the magnitude of any tidal excursions.;
4. The amount of and type of data and information necessary to provide a reasonably accurate characterization of the criteria (or core indicators) associated with the designated uses in the
5. segment or waterbody;
6. Any expected changes in significant influences in the watershed (land use, point or nonpoint sources of pollutants);
7. Any site-specific concerns such as patchy or unique habitat distribution patterns or biological population distributions; and
8. Any specific actions needed within a specific area.

III. SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

Consider using the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD)15 coding scheme to georeference segments, where segments may comprise part of an NHD reach, an individual NHD reach, or a collection of NHD reaches or parts of reaches.

For large waterbodies, partition into the main river and major tributaries. For conterminous waterbodies such as bays and channels, delineation by pollution analyite, location or designated uses may be more appropriate.

IV. REQUIRED DESCRIPTORS

Partition waterbodies on the basis of one or more of the following descriptors:

1. From named confluence as published on USGS 1:63360 scale published maps;
2. From latitude/longitude;
3. From river mile descriptors; and
4. From aliquot part designations.

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Date

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