



Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation Frequently Asked Questions 2022 Draft Integrated Report

Integrated Report Basics

1. What is the Integrated Report?

The Alaska Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report (Integrated Report) is a report on the health of Alaska's waterbodies. The report is required under Clean Water Act sections 303(d) and 305(b). The Integrated Report helps the State prioritize waters for data gathering, watershed protection, and restoration of impaired waters.

2. What is the timeline for the Integrated Report?

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) prepares the Integrated Report every two years and submits the report to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Throughout the two years, DEC:

- Puts out a public call for water quality data
- Reviews data for minimum data quality requirements
- Analyzes data to determine if Alaska's Water Quality Standards (WQS) at 18 AAC 70 are met
- Prepares draft report of findings
- Solicits stakeholder comments
- Updates draft report
- Submits draft report to EPA

3. What information is in the Integrated Report and what do the categories mean?

DEC evaluates available water quality data every two years to determine if waterbodies are meeting Alaska's WQS. A summary of the results of this evaluation are provided in the Integrated Report. Waterbodies are further classified into five categories depending on their health.

Submit comments by 11:59 PM
February 6, 2022 electronically at
[https://dec.alaska.gov/commish/
public-notices/](https://dec.alaska.gov/commish/public-notices/)

DEC Integrated Report website:
[https://dec.alaska.gov/water/wat
er-quality/integrated-report/](https://dec.alaska.gov/water/water-quality/integrated-report/)

Public informational meeting
from 4 to 6 PM on January 18,
2022. Meeting link:
<https://tinyurl.com/ADEC-IR>, or
call 907-202-7104, access code
754 266 123#.

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| Categories 1 and 2 | Waters for which there is enough information to determine that water quality standards are attained for all or some of their designated uses. |
| Category 3 | Waters for which there is not enough information to determine their status. |
| Category 4 | Waters that are impaired, but have one of several different types of waterbody recovery plans. |
| Category 5 | Waters that are impaired and do not yet have waterbody recovery plans. Also known as 303(d) list impaired waters. |

4. Does a waterbody always stay in the same category?

As new water quality information becomes available, DEC will re-evaluate whether waters are doing well (attaining) or poorly (exceeding) when measured against water quality standards and change the category, as appropriate, in future Integrated Reports. Categories for the Integrated Report are described in the table above.

5. What information is in the Integrated Report and what do the categories mean?

Information on all waterbodies evaluated for the Integrated Report can be found on DEC's Integrated Report webpage: <http://dec.alaska.gov/water/water-quality/integrated-report>. In 2018, DEC switched from a paper report to an electronic reporting database. Data for the Integrated Report is now reported to EPA through the Assessment, Total Maximum Daily Load Tracking and Implementation System (ATTAINS) database, an online system for accessing information about conditions in the Nation's surface waters.

Since there is no longer a written report, DEC provides an on-line table showing the categories of all evaluated waterbodies. In addition, all Attainment and Impairment Determination papers, a map of impaired waters, and summary fact sheets can be found on DEC's Integrated Report webpage.

Information provided to the ATTAINS database can also be found on How's My Waterway, a website created by EPA designed to provide the public with information about the condition of their local waters. Water quality information is displayed on three scales, community, state and national. The website is under development for Alaska and the community scale is incomplete. You can access Alaska state scale information for the Integrated Report in How's My Waterway at <https://mywaterway.epa.gov/state/AK/water-quality-overview>.

6. Where does DEC get water quality data for the Integrated Report?

DEC staff collaborate on water quality monitoring with a diverse group of partners including governmental agencies, Tribes, municipalities, and watershed-based nongovernmental organizations. DEC issues a public notice every two years requesting submission of water quality data on Alaska's waters for inclusion in the Integrated Report, and also accepts water quality data and information on a continuous basis.

7. How does DEC analyze the data?

DEC has guidance for analysis of water quality data for the Integrated Report, including listing methodologies for specific pollutants like turbidity, petroleum hydrocarbons, pathogens and residues. These documents provide information on minimum data requirements and data evaluation methods for analyzing water quality data for the Integrated Report. The listing methodologies can be found on DEC's Integrated Report webpage:

<http://dec.alaska.gov/water/water-quality/integrated-report>

Impaired Waters

8. What is the impaired waters list (a.k.a., Clean Water Action Section 303(d) list of impaired waters or Category 5 in the Integrated Report)?

If the data evaluation conducted for a particular pollutant indicates that the waterbody is not meeting criteria, and the exceedances are not due to a natural condition, a waterbody will be proposed for Category 5 in the Integrated Report. The evaluation must show the presence of pollutants and persistent exceedances of water quality standards. EPA must approve waterbodies that are moving onto or off of the impaired waters list.

9. What happens when a water is considered impaired and placed in Category 5?

When a waterbody is placed in Category 5, it triggers the development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) or recovery plan. The development of a recovery plan is a public process. It includes an assessment of pollutant sources and development of a schedule of actions to improve water quality. The placement of a waterbody in Category 5 may also impact current or future permitted activities, depending on the nature of the pollutant and the activities in the watershed.

Various types of restoration activities may be suggested to improve water quality in impaired waterbodies. Many of these restoration activities include opportunities for public involvement, inclusion in the Alaska Clean Water Actions grant program, and follow-up water quality monitoring after restoration activities have been implemented. If you want to be involved in restoration activities, you can subscribe to the Nonpoint Source Program email listserv at <http://list.state.ak.us/mailman/listinfo/dec.wqsar.nps/>.

10. How are impaired waters removed from Category 5?

As new water quality information becomes available, DEC will re-evaluate whether waterbodies are exceeding or attaining water quality standards and change the category as appropriate. Under the Clean Water Act, there are three ways to remove a water from the 303(d) list of impaired waters:

- Develop a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and implementation plan; this would move a waterbody to Category 4a.

- Develop a waterbody recovery plan including a commitment to implement enforceable actions and monitoring; this would move a waterbody to category 4b. If a waterbody recovery plan is established on a waterbody before being placed in Category 5, it may be placed directly in Category 4b.
- Demonstrate through monitoring that the waterbody is no longer impaired.

11. Is DEC just trying to find a way to issue restrictions and regulations by calling waters impaired? For example, do you just want to restrict for motorized boat use?

DEC's goal is to allow for Alaskans' use of our waterbodies while helping those water bodies remain healthy for current and future uses. We do not issue unnecessary restrictions or regulations. The federally required Integrated Report evaluation is a data driven process, and when data indicates impairment, DEC is required to report on it. In many situations, regulations are not needed nor are they the best approach to fixing pollution if the problem can be addressed through other means. DEC supports a variety of methods to protect and improve water quality.

More Information

12. Where can I find more information on the water quality studies DEC has done?

DEC's searchable database can be viewed at <http://dec.alaska.gov/water/water-quality/reports/>

13. What can I do to help improve water quality?

Take action to help reduce water pollution. Changing our behavior is a big part of reducing pollution, such as being careful when using fuel containers, quickly cleaning up drips and spills using absorbent materials (not dish soap), and reducing your boat wake to avoid stirring up excess sediments. For additional information on best management practices to reduce pollution, see: <http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wastewater/stormwater/best-management-practices/>.

14. How do I make public comments on the draft Integrated Report?

Comments relevant to the draft 2022 Integrated Report may be submitted electronically via DEC's public notice site at <https://dec.alaska.gov/commish/public-notice/>. If you are unable to submit comments via the DEC public notice website, you may submit them by mail to Amber Bethe at 555 Cordova St., Anchorage, AK 99501, or e-mail to amber.bethe@alaska.gov. Comments must be received by close of public comments period at 11:59 p.m. Alaska time on February 6, 2022.

15. What are the next steps?

DEC will review and respond to all written public comments received by 11:59 PM February 6, 2022. DEC will then prepare a revised Final Integrated Report and a Response to Comments and submit these documents to EPA for approval. EPA then approves or disapproves the list of impaired waters (Category 5) and submits their findings to Congress.