

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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Winner 2009 [PAEE Business Partner](#) Of The Year Award

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16,599 Miles Of PA Streams Do Not Meet Water Quality Standards

The [final 2012 Integrated Waters report](#) the Department of Environmental Protection submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Monday reported nearly 20 percent or 16,599 miles of streams in Pennsylvania do not meet federal water quality standards. 67,972 miles meet water quality standards.

This represents a slight increase in the number of miles of streams not meeting water quality standards since the 2010 report. DEP reported [16,547 miles were impaired](#) two years ago. In 2008 DEP reported [nearly 16,000 miles](#) of impaired streams.

The three major causes of water quality impairment in the 2012 report were listed as: agricultural runoff-- 5,705 miles, abandoned mine drainage-- 5,596 and urban runoff/stormwater-- 3,482 miles. 3,482 miles are impaired from unknown sources.

Of the impaired miles, 9,801 require Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to reduce pollutant inputs and 6,490 have an approved TMDL and one-third-- 3,311 miles-- do not yet have approved TMDLs.

An additional 62 miles are under compliance agreements and expected to reasonable amount of time.

There are 80,525 acres of lakes assessed for aquatic life use and 43,194 acres are attaining that use, 37,331 acres of lakes do not.

Of the impaired acres, 5,420 require a TMDL, 11,366 have an approved TMDL, and 20,544 acres are impaired, but do not require a TMDL because they are not affected by pollutants. The largest problem source is agriculture and largest stressors are organic enrichment/low dissolved oxygen.

Currently there are approximately 1,318 miles of streams with fish consumption advisories in need of TMDLs and 704 with 4 approved TMDLs. Lake listings include 40,405 acres requiring TMDLs and an additional 5,664 with approved TMDLs.

There is a statewide fish consumption advisory of no more than one meal per week for all waters to protect against the ingestion of unconfirmed contaminants.

The report on impaired streams and lakes is the result of a ten year program DEP completed in April 2007 to assess all wadeable utilized a biological assessment of the aquatic life use.

In addition to listing the impaired streams and lakes, the report outlines the programs and initiatives DEP intends to use to bring impaired waters up to federal water quality standards as required by the federal Clean Water Act.

Among other programs, the report notes in July 2009, due to budget constraints, DEP began limiting its direct technical and financial support for volunteer monitors to specific projects that result in the generation of quality assured data related to DEP's highest priorities. Prior to 2009, DEP helped over 11,000 citizen water monitors feed data into its assessment process making those assessments much more comprehensive.

And citizen interest in streams and rivers is very much alive, even with significant cuts to citizen support. Take, for example, voting for DCNR's River of the Year. 25,450 votes cast in that process with the Monongahela River winning this year's honors. Rivers and streams in Pennsylvania generate a huge amount of interest and support, more than in any other environmental program.

A copy of the [final 2012 Integrated Waters report](#) is available online.

NewsClips:

[DEP Rejects Call For Susquehanna Impaired Designation](#)
[Susquehanna River Not On Impaired List](#)