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2026 Triennial Review/Arkansas Water Quality Standards: Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment - Division of Environmental Quality Initiates Review

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The Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment - Division of Environmental Quality ("ADEQ") announced in a September 25th notice that it is initiating its 2026 Triennial Review of Arkansas's Water Quality Standards ("WQS"): Pollution Control and Ecology Commission 8 CAR Part 21 (Rule 2).

The review is required pursuant to the Clean Water Act mandating that states conduct a comprehensive review of their WQS at least every three years.

The Clean Water Act requires states and authorized tribes to periodically review and, as appropriate, adopt new or revised Water Quality Standards ("WQS") to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act. They must submit any new or revised WQS resulting from such a review to the United States Environmental Protection Agency for review and approval or disapproval under Clean Water Act Section 303(c).

Section 303 of the Clean Water Act requires that each state develop WQS for jurisdictional Waters of the United States within their borders. They establish the water quality goals for a specific waterbody and also serve as a regulatory basis for the development of water quality-based effluent limits and strategies for individual point sources.

WQS consist of three parts:

1. Designated use of the waterbody;
2. The water quality criteria ("WQC") that are necessary to protect existing uses and to attain the beneficial uses designated by the states; and,
3. An antidegradation statement or policy to protect existing uses in high-quality water.

Section 303 specifies the adoption of WQS as primarily the responsibility of the states and tribes. The states must adopt uses consistent with Clean Water Act objectives and water quality criteria sufficient to protect the chosen uses. In addition, Section 303(d) requires the state on a triennial basis identify waters that are deemed impaired. However, EPA is required to ensure that state WQS meet the minimum

requirements of the Clean Water Act. Therefore, the Clean Water Act regulations provide for EPA review of any state WQS changes.

ADEQ announced in the September 25th notice that it will be holding a stakeholder workgroup meeting. It is inviting organizations to participate in this workgroup to discuss draft revisions for this review process.

Participants are stated to ideally have a strong working knowledge of water quality standards and experience working with ADEQ.

The stakeholder workgroup will be held in the Commission Room at the E&E headquarters located in North Little Rock. A meeting will be held on Tuesday October 20, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with a break for lunch.

A copy of the notice can be found [here](#).