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Draft EPA-USGS Technical Report: Protecting Aquatic Life from Effects of Hydrologic Alteration: American Water Works Association Comments

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American Water Works Association comments.

The American Water Works Association (“AWWA”) submitted June 17th comments on the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s and United States Geological Survey’s (collectively “EPA”), *Draft Technical Report for Protecting Aquatic Life from Effects of Hydrologic Alteration* (“draft report”).

EPA states that the report was developed to serve as a source of information for States, Tribes and Territories on:

1. the natural flow regime potential effects of flow alteration on aquatic life;
2. clean water act programs that can be used to support the natural flow regime and maintain the health of aquatic life; and
3. a flexible, non-prescriptive framework to quantify targets for flow regime components that are protective of aquatic life.

The AWWA states it is the largest non-profit, scientific educational association dedicated to managing and treating water. The organization states in its June 17th comments that because the assurance of reliable community water supplies and the management of community waste water involves both engineering decisions and operational practice that alter water body hydrology. It’s members have a strong interest in the draft report. It further states that the organization advocates for:

... careful consideration of both intentional impacts and unintended consequences when making decisions that will have impacts on stream hydrology. Comments below are intended to assist EPA and USGS in approving the current report and to insure that all important factors considered, as AWWA believes its report as currently written could potentially cause widespread and profound unintended consequences.

AWWA states that the two agencies must recognize that the draft report will be deemed federal policy and have considerable impact on the economy and on regulatory processes. It characterizes the draft report as constituting a *significant federal guidance document* OMB Bulletin M-07-07 “Agency Good Guidance Practices” therefore mandating compliance of certain procedural requirements. AWWA also requests that the draft report include discussions of consideration such as:

- Flow alterations impact more than just biodiversity
- Biodiversity can be impacted without alterations to flow

Concern is expressed regarding the need to utilize the most up to date information and include term and ensure that all terms are fully explained and used in an appropriate context. The comments provide examples that the organization believes indicate the need to address these issues.

Another issue raised is a concern that examples and issues discussed within the document address only the impacts on quality and flow and do not consider options available to reduce these impacts or provide net improvements. Two examples are provided in the comments.

[A copy of the comments can be downloaded here.](#)