



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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Water resource agency invites public comment for the 2014 water quality assessment list

RALEIGH – The state Division of Water Resources has released for public comment the 2014 list of streams, rivers and lakes that are not meeting state water quality requirements.

The federal Clean Water Act requires that states perform a water quality assessment every two years. As part of that assessment, states are required to identify and establish a priority ranking for water bodies where existing pollution controls are not protective enough to maintain applicable water quality standards. Water quality standards are narrative or numerical descriptions of water quality that protect human health and aquatic life.

If the assessment shows there is an identifiable pollutant that is causing the breach of water quality standards, and there is no existing management strategy for that pollutant, then that water body is put on a list often called the 303(d) list. The number 303(d) refers to the section of the Clean Water Act where a description of the list can be found. The 303(d) list is only for those waters that exceed state water quality criteria and where a strategy or plan is required by EPA to address the pollutant.

The most numerous listing is for closures of shellfish harvesting areas, most often caused by bacteria associated with runoff from rainstorms. Water bodies are also added to the list due to cloudy water quality, lack of number or diversity of aquatic insects, and excessive chlorophyll a, an indicator of algal growth.

The Environmental Protection Agency requires each state to submit its 303(d) list by April 1 in even numbered years for EPA to review and approve. The state Division of Water Resources has posted the North Carolina draft 2014 303(d) list on the division's website at: <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/wq/ps/mtu/assessment>, and is asking for public comments before sending the list to the EPA. Comments should be sent to andy.painter@ncdenr.gov before March 14.

The website has several documents including the draft 303(d) list, a description of the methods used to evaluate water bodies in the state, a guide to understanding information in the list and instructions for making comments.

For other questions, or to request an assessment fact sheet for a specific water body, please contact Cam McNutt in the Division of Water Resources at 919-807-6435 or cam.mcnutt@ncdenr.gov.

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