

Staff Statement

Public Hearing:

An opportunity to provide comments on the Division of Water Quality's 2016 Integrated Report

Date, Time, Location:

Tuesday, July, 19, 2016 2:00-5:00 pm
DEQ Board Room at the Multi Agency State Office Building,
195 North 1950 West, Salt Lake City, UT.

Staff Representative:

James Harris

Good Afternoon:

My name is James Harris and I am manager of the Monitoring and Reporting Section in the Division of Water Quality. I am here to provide some background information on the Draft 2016 Integrated Report for this public hearing.

The DWQ webpage contains a number of documents that comprise the report which go into considerable detail on the results of the assessment. There are two primary components of the Integrated Report, the 303(d) list and the 305(b) report, both of which take their name from the section of the Clean Water Act that statutorily requires states to produce them every two years for EPA approval. The 305(b) report is a summary of the condition of all waters of the state. For EPA reporting purposes, these waters are given one of 5 assessment categories, ranging from "fully supporting" (category 1) to "not supporting" (category 5). Category 2 waters are termed "partially supporting" since some but not all the uses of these waters were assessed. Category 3 waters represent a very broad group of waters which require additional supporting data to make an assessment decision. And lastly, category 4 waters are those

that were not supporting their beneficial uses but pollution control measures have been designed or implemented through the development of a Total Maximum Daily Load or similar strategy overseen by DWQ's Watershed Protection Section.

Although summarized in the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list is comprised solely of those waters which have been identified as "not supporting" through the assessment process. These lakes, reservoirs, streams and rivers are given priority ranking for the development of Total Maximum Daily Load studies, which identify pollution sources for reduction with the ultimate intent to meet water quality standards.

Utah's water quality standards provide the basis for the Integrated Report by defining the geographical extent of state waterbodies, assigning their applicable uses (such as drinking water, agriculture, recreation and aquatic life) and setting limits in the form of pollutant standards intended to protect those uses. DWQ has built upon these standards by developing assessment methods which define the specific practices which staff apply in evaluating the condition of Utah's waters. These methods comprise Chapter 2 of the Integrated Report and have been released for public comment in March of 2015 prior to performing the assessment for the 2016 IR.

As the foundation for the report, it is worthwhile to highlight changes to the Assessment Methods implemented since the 2014 IR was completed. In addition to a number of small refinements to the methods which clarify the application of water quality standards and criteria to rivers and streams, several significant changes have been made to the assessment of lakes and reservoirs. These include the application of supplemental indicators used to confirm harmful algae bloom impairments in lakes to include cyanotoxins, chlorophyll a, phycocyanin and harmful algal bloom –related beach closures. These were applied to Utah Lake and are summarized in Chapter 5 of the report. Chapter 6 summarizes the results of analysis of Farmington Bay harmful algal bloom data. While no final assessment decision on Farmington Bay was

made as part of the draft 2016 Integrated Report, Utah Lake was determined to be “not supporting” through the application of narrative standards for recreational use support due to harmful algal blooms.

As mentioned before, the intent of issuing the 303(d) (or Category 5) list is to identify waters which require pollution reduction strategies in order to improve water quality and support their uses. In order to better apply resources and focus on priority waters, DWQ has developed a new 303(d) Vision for implementing its Watershed Protection Program. In addition to applying revised TMDL prioritization, the vision adds a new assessment category (5-Alt) which allows for alternative approaches to developing TMDL studies for waters affected by hydromodification, habitat alteration, or natural causes of pollution. In addition, this alternative addresses salinity issues that fall under the auspices of the Colorado Salinity Program and waters which offer an opportunity for straight-to-implementation approaches for meeting standards.

Throughout the process of developing the 303(d) vision and the Integrated Report DWQ has been dedicated to involving the public and stakeholders in improving our programs. By increasing transparency and engaging those partners who can assist us with implementation of pollution reduction strategies, we hope to reach our goals of improving and protecting Utah’s water resources. We, therefore, encourage and welcome your input during this hearing and the public comment period.

Once again, for those of you who are here to ask questions about the Utah Lake Harmful Algae Bloom, please go to Room 1020c where Division of Water Quality staff will address your questions.

Thank you.