



STATE OF NEVADA

Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Jim Gibbons, Governor

Allen Biaggi, Director

Leo M. Drozdoff, P.E., Administrator

Bureau of Water Quality Planning

Proposed Changes To Select Water Quality Standards For Nevada Waters In The Snake River Drainage Basin (NAC 445A.1332 – 1362)

FACT SHEET

May 2010

Background

Section 303 of the Clean Water Act requires that States periodically review and as appropriate modify water quality standards. Water quality standards include criteria that provide limits on a particular pollutant or limits on a condition of a waterbody designed to protect and support a designated use. The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Water Quality Planning (NDEP-BWQP) has completed a review and evaluation of the water quality standards for the Nevada waterbodies which are in the Snake River Drainage Basin. These waters are located in Northern Elko County and consist of the following: South Fork Owyhee River; Owyhee River; Bruneau River; Jarbidge River; East Fork Jarbidge River; Salmon Falls Creek; Shoshone Creek; and Goose Creek. The water quality standards for the above mentioned waterbodies are contained in the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 445A.1332-1362.

Proposed Regulation Changes

The following changes to the water quality standards are proposed by NDEP-BWQP based on current criteria recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), maintaining consistency with standards for other waterbodies in Nevada, and other recommendations and information.

- Define the reach or segment of the rivers/streams that the water quality standards apply to. Currently, the water quality regulations for the Nevada waters in the Snake River Drainage system only contain monitoring control point designations.
- Adopt a sulfate water quality standard of 250 mg/l to protect municipal or domestic supply beneficial use associated with the Nevada waters in the Snake River Drainage system.
- Revise the fecal coliform bacteria standard as an indicator for evaluating recreational water quality. Fecal coliform would still be retained as a water quality standard but the criteria value would be revised to a less restrictive value to protect beneficial uses other than recreation involving contact with the water. The existing *E. coli* bacteria water quality standard would be used as the primary standard to protect the waters for swimming and other recreational activities.

- Replace the existing narrative color criteria of “increase in color must not be more than 10 color units above natural conditions” with a numerical standard of ≤ 75 color units to protect municipal or domestic supply beneficial use.
- Change the mathematical operational nomenclature associated with the water quality standard numerical values from “<” to “ \leq ” to be consistent with how the standards for all other waterbodies are defined in the NAC water quality regulations.

NDEP-BWQP has identified four tributary creeks in the Snake River Drainage system which are either high quality tributary waters and in need of protection from future impairment, or are considered a high-risk water due to proximity to ongoing/potential land use activities. These waters which are currently not contained in Nevada’s water quality regulations are:

- Taylor Canyon Creek, a tributary to the South Fork Owyhee River;
- Trout Creek, a tributary to Goose Creek;
- Jack Creek, a tributary to the Jarbidge River; and
- Trout Creek, a tributary to Salmon Falls Creek

Recommended beneficial uses for these tributary creeks and the standards to protect the beneficial uses are proposed to be added to the NAC regulations.

For questions, comments, or additional information please contact:

Paul Comba [775-687-9446; pcomba@ndep.nv.gov]
Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Water Quality Planning
901 S. Stewart Street, Suite 4001
Carson City, NV 89701