Abstract for South Carolina Water Resources Conference

Title: South Carolina Water Quality Standards

Organization: South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

Speaker: Heather S. Preston, Director
Water Quality Division - Bureau of Water
803-898-3105
prestohs@dhec.sc.gov

Summary:

This presentation will provide an overview of the South Carolina Water Quality Standards as well as the 303(d) list, and Total Maximum Daily Loads or TMDLs.

Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act requires all states to develop water quality standards. In South Carolina, our standards are contained in Regulation, 61-68, Water Classifications and Standards. These standards establish a system and rules for managing and protecting the quality of South Carolina's surface and ground water.

There are three major components to water quality standards: designated use, water quality criteria, and antidegradation policies. The designated uses are goals that society through governmental units establishes for a waterbody or segment. While these goals may vary from waterbody to waterbody, the basic assumption is that all waters will be fishable and swimmable. In South Carolina, we have a number of different designated, or classified, uses. For instance, we have waters designated as Trout Waters, Shellfish Harvesting Waters, Outstanding Resource Waters, etc.

Once we establish the use for the waterbody, water quality criteria must be developed to protect that use. For instance, trout waters require higher levels of dissolved oxygen than freshwaters and in shellfish harvesting waters, we have much more stringent limits with respect to fecal coliform. These criteria are consistent with the use we are protecting. Finally, the standards contain antidegradation policies to ensure that the use is protected and does not deteriorate.

The Department maintains an extensive ambient water quality monitoring network. We monitor stations around the state to determine if the waterbodies are achieving water quality standards. When a waterbody doesn't meet standards it is listed as impaired in accordance with Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. Every two years, states are required to publish a list of impaired waters referred to as the 303(d) list.
Once a waterbody is listed on the 303(d) list, states are required to develop a TMDLs. In the simplest terms, a TMDL represents the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. TMDLs are a plan or strategy for bringing a waterbody back to attainment with the standards. It is important to note that a TMDL can only result in water quality improvements if it is implemented. It is the implementation of a TMDL, not the development, that will improve water quality.

Speaker Bio:

Heather Preston has worked for the SCDHEC for the past 15 years in a variety of program areas. From 2000 to 2006, she was the Manager of the Regulatory Development Section in the Bureau of Air Quality. In 2006, she became the Director of the Water Quality Division in the Bureau of Water. She has a bachelor's degree from McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and a Master's degree from the University of Southern California.