



What are TMDLs?

A Total Maximum Daily Load, also known as a TMDL, is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can absorb and still meet (not violate) water quality standards. Missouri has established water quality standards for drinking water, fishing, swimming, aquatic life and other designated uses. TMDLs apply to waters that do not meet these standards. The TMDL process is a tool used to fight water pollution. Its main objective is to restore and protect water quality in our streams, rivers and lakes.

A stream is considered impaired when it fails to meet the water quality standards established by the Department and approved by the Clean Water Commission. Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to identify and list all impaired waters. This 303(d) List is then revised and updated every two years. After studying the scientific data, waters are added or subtracted from the list depending on the status of their health. The department is currently required to develop TMDLs for 228 water body/pollutant pairs for approval by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Completed TMDLs and other information about water quality issues are available on the Department's Web site at www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/index.html.

After the Department determines which water bodies are to be included on the 303(d) List, it is submitted to the Clean Water Commission and the EPA for approval. Each river, stream or lake on the list will have a TMDL study done and a plan written for restoring the water to its designated use. Different criteria must be met for different uses. For example, water quality requirements for drinking water would be different from those for livestock watering. You can learn more about the condition of your watershed by visiting the EPA Web site at www.epa.gov/surf.

Information contained in a TMDL document includes:

- Location of the impaired water body.
- Identification of the pollutant(s) and their sources.
- Information on how/why the water body got on the List.
- A calculation of the pollutant "load" that the water can absorb without becoming impaired.
- A plan to reduce the pollutant "load" and restore the water body to meet the criteria for its designated use(s).

TMDLs are ideally suited to address nonpoint sources of pollution that occur when runoff from rainwater, snowmelt and crop irrigation carries pollutants into the water. Polluted runoff isn't as easy to spot as a pipe from a factory or a sewage treatment plant. However, garden fertilizers, automotive oil, construction debris and even pet and yard wastes pose serious and significant threats to our environment.

The TMDL process works best when local people get together to understand and identify problems in their watershed. They can help develop the most effective solution for reducing water pollution. Citizen participation and cooperation is crucial for successful watershed management. Inclusive, community-based, public stewardship is the key to protecting our natural resources.

For more information

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