

Chapter NR 102

WATER QUALITY STANDARDS FOR
WISCONSIN SURFACE WATERS

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History: Chapter NR 102 as it existed on September 30, 1973 was repealed and a new chapter NR 102 was created, effective October 1, 1973.

NR 102.01 Purpose. (1) The purpose of this chapter is to establish, in conjunction with chs. NR 103 to 105, water quality standards for surface waters of the state pursuant to s. 144.025 (2) (b), Stats. This chapter describes the designated use categories for such waters and the water quality criteria necessary to support these uses. This chapter and chs. NR 103 to 105 constitute the water quality standards for the surface waters of Wisconsin.

(2) Water quality standards shall protect the public interest, which includes the protection of public health and welfare and the present and prospective uses of all waters of the state for public and private water supplies, propagation of fish and other aquatic life and wild and domestic animals, domestic and recreational purposes, and agricultural, commercial, industrial, and other legitimate uses. In all cases where the potential uses are in conflict, water quality standards shall protect the general public interest.

(3) Water quality standards serve as a basis for developing and implementing control strategies to achieve legislative policies and goals. Water quality standards are the basis for deriving water quality based effluent limitations. Water quality standards also serve as a basis for decisions in other regulatory, permitting or funding activities that impact water quality.

History: Cr. Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89.

NR 102.02 Applicability. The provisions of this chapter are applicable to surface waters of Wisconsin.

History: Cr. Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89.

NR 102.03 Definitions. (1) "Mixing zone" means a region in which a discharge of different characteristics than the receiving water is in transit and progressively diluted from the source to the receiving system.

(2) "Natural conditions" means the normal daily and seasonal variations in climatic and atmospheric conditions, and the existing physical and chemical characteristics of a water or the course in which it flows.

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(3) "Natural temperature" means the normal existing temperature of a surface water including daily and seasonal changes outside the zone of influence of any artificial inputs.

(4) "Resource management" means the application of control techniques to enhance or preserve a surface water in accordance with statutory provisions and in the general public interest.

(5) "Sanitary survey" means a thorough investigation and evaluation of a surface water including bacteriological sampling to determine the extent and cause of any bacterial contamination.

(6) "Surface waters" means all natural and artificial named and unnamed lakes and all naturally flowing streams within the boundaries of the state, but not including cooling lakes, farm ponds and facilities constructed for the treatment of wastewaters (the term waters as used in this chapter means surface waters).

(7) "Unauthorized concentrations of substances" means pollutants or other chemicals introduced into surface waters without prior permit or knowledge of the department, but not including accidental or unintentional spills.

(8) "Best practicable control technology" means that level of treatment established by the department under s. 147.04 (2) (a), Stats., for categories and classes of point sources to be achieved by not later than July 1, 1977.

(9) "Best available control technology" means that level of treatment established by the department under s. 147.04 (2) (b) 1., Stats., for categories and classes of point sources to be achieved by not later than July 1, 1983.

History: Cr. Register, September, 1973, No. 213, eff. 10-1-73; r. (1), renum. from NR 102.01, Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89.

NR 102.04 Categories of standards. (1) **GENERAL.** To preserve and enhance the quality of waters, standards are established to govern water management decisions. Practices attributable to municipal, industrial, commercial, domestic, agricultural, land development or other activities shall be controlled so that all waters including the mixing zone and the effluent channel meet the following conditions at all times and under all flow conditions:

(a) Substances that will cause objectionable deposits on the shore or in the bed of a body of water, shall not be present in such amounts as to interfere with public rights in waters of the state.

(b) Floating or submerged debris, oil, scum or other material shall not be present in such amounts as to interfere with public rights in waters of the state.

(c) Materials producing color, odor, taste or unsightliness shall not be present in such amounts as to interfere with public rights in waters of the state.

(d) Substances in concentrations or combinations which are toxic or harmful to humans shall not be present in amounts found to be of public health significance, nor shall substances be present in amounts which are acutely harmful to animal, plant or aquatic life.

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(2) **REVISED STANDARDS.** It should be recognized that these standards will be revised as new information or advancing technology indicate that revisions are in the public interest. Water used for hydropower and commercial shipping depends mainly on quantity, depth and elevation; consequently, no specific quality standards for these uses have been prepared.

(3) **FISH AND OTHER AQUATIC LIFE USES.** The department shall classify all surface waters into one of the fish and other aquatic life subcategories described in this subsection. Only those use subcategories identified in pars. (a) to (d) shall be considered suitable for the protection and propagation of a balanced fish and other aquatic life community as provided in the federal water pollution control act amendments of 1972, P.L. 92-500; 33 USC 1251 et seq.

(a) *Great Lakes communities.* This subcategory includes Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and Green Bay including all bays, arms and inlets thereof and including those tributaries which serve as a spawning area for anadromous fish species.

(b) *Cold water communities.* This subcategory includes surface waters except those in par. (a), capable of supporting a community of cold water fish and other aquatic life, or serving as a spawning area for cold water fish species. This subcategory includes, but is not restricted to, surface waters identified as trout water by the department of natural resources (Wisconsin Trout Streams, publication 6-3600 (80)).

(c) **WARM WATER SPORT FISH COMMUNITIES.** This subcategory includes surface waters capable of supporting a community of warm water sport fish or serving as a spawning area for warm water sport fish.

(d) *Warm water forage fish communities.* This subcategory includes surface waters capable of supporting an abundant diverse community of forage fish and other aquatic life.

(e) *Limited forage fish communities* (Intermediate surface waters). This subcategory includes surface waters of limited capacity and naturally poor water quality or habitat. These surface waters are capable of supporting only a limited community of forage fish and other aquatic life.

(f) *Limited aquatic life* (Marginal surface waters). This subcategory includes surface waters of severely limited capacity and naturally poor water quality or habitat. These surface waters are capable of supporting only a limited community of aquatic life.

(4) **STANDARDS FOR FISH AND AQUATIC LIFE.** Except for natural conditions, all waters classified for fish and aquatic life shall meet the following criteria:

(a) *Dissolved oxygen.* Except as provided in par. (e) and s. NR 104.02 (3), the dissolved oxygen content in surface waters may not be lowered to less than 5 mg/L at any time.

(b) *Temperature.* 1. There shall be no temperature changes that may adversely affect aquatic life.

2. Natural daily and seasonal temperature fluctuations shall be maintained.

3. The maximum temperature rise at the edge of the mixing zone above the existing natural temperature shall not exceed 5° F for streams and 3° F for lakes.

4. The temperature shall not exceed 89° F for warm water fish.

(c) *pH*. The pH shall be within the range of 6.0 to 9.0, with no change greater than 0.5 units outside the estimated natural seasonal maximum and minimum.

(d) *Other substances*. Unauthorized concentrations of substances are not permitted that alone or in combination with other materials present are toxic to fish or other aquatic life. Surface waters shall meet the acute and chronic criteria as set forth in or developed pursuant to ss. NR 105.05 and 105.06. Surface waters shall meet the criteria which correspond to the appropriate fish and aquatic life subcategory for the surface water, except as provided in s. NR 104.02 (3).

(e) *Temperature and dissolved oxygen for cold waters*. Streams classified as trout waters by the department of natural resources (Wisconsin Trout Streams, publication 6-3600 (80)) or as great lakes or cold water communities may not be altered from natural background temperature and dissolved oxygen levels to such an extent that trout populations are adversely affected.

1. There shall be no significant artificial increases in temperature where natural trout reproduction is to be protected.

2. Dissolved oxygen in classified trout streams shall not be artificially lowered to less than 6.0 mg/l at any time, nor shall the dissolved oxygen be lowered to less 7.0 mg/l during the spawning season.

3. The dissolved oxygen in great lakes tributaries used by stocked salmonids for spawning runs shall not be lowered below natural background during the period of habitation.

(5) **STANDARDS FOR RECREATIONAL USE**. A sanitary survey and/or evaluation to assure protection from fecal contamination is the chief criterion in determining the suitability of a surface water for recreational use.

(a) *Bacteriological guidelines*. The membrane filter fecal coliform count may not exceed 200 per 100 ml as a geometric mean based on not less than 5 samples per month, nor exceed 400 per 100 ml in more than 10% of all samples during any month.

(b) *Exceptions*. Whenever the department determines, in accordance with the procedures specified in s. NR 210.06, that wastewater disinfection is not required to protect recreational uses, the recreational use criteria and classifications as established in this subsection and in chs. NR 103 and 104 do not apply.

(6) **STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE**. All surface waters shall meet the human threshold and human cancer criteria specified in or developed pursuant to ss. NR 105.08 and 105.09, respectively. The applicable criteria vary depending on whether the surface water is used for public drinking water supplies and vary with the type of fish and other aquatic life subcategory. All surface waters providing public drinking water supplies or classified as great lakes, cold water, or warm water sport fish communities as described in sub. (3) shall meet the taste and odor criteria specified in or developed pursuant to s. NR 102.14.

(7) **STANDARDS FOR WILD AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS.** All surface waters shall be classified for wild and domestic animal uses and meet the wild and domestic animal criteria specified in or developed pursuant to s. NR 105.07.

History: Cr. Register, September, 1973, No. 213, eff. 10-1-73; am. (3), Register, December, 1977, No. 264, eff. 1-1-78; renum. from NR 102.02, r. (3) (d) 1. to 3., and (5), renum. (3) (intro.) to (d) (intro.) and (e) and (4) to be (4) (intro.) to (e) and (5) and am. (4) (a), (d), (e) (intro.) and (5), cr. (6) and (7), Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89.

NR 102.05 Application of standards. (1) ANTIDEGRADATION. (a) No waters of the state shall be lowered in quality unless it has been affirmatively demonstrated to the department that such a change is justified as a result of necessary economic and social development, provided that no new or increased effluent interferes with or becomes injurious to any assigned uses made of or presently possible in such waters.

(b) *Classification system.* For the purposes of this subsection, all surface waters of the state, or portions thereof, shall be classified as one of the following:

1. Outstanding resource waters as listed in s. NR 102.10,
2. Exceptional resource waters as listed in s. NR 102.11,
3. Great Lakes waters as listed in s. NR 102.12 (1),
4. Fish and aquatic life waters as described in s. NR 102.13, or
5. Waters listed in tables 3 through 8 in ss. NR 104.05 to 104.10.

(2) **STREAMFLOW.** Water quality standards will not be maintained under all natural occurrences of flow, temperature, or other water quality characteristics. The determination of water quality based effluent limitations or other management practices shall be based upon the following conditions except as provided in ch. NR 106 for toxic and organoleptic substances and whole effluent toxicity:

(a) The average minimum 7-day low streamflow which occurs once in 10 years (7-day Q_{10}); or,

(b) In the case of dissolved oxygen and wherever sufficient data on streamflow and temperature are available, by application of a 0.274% level of nonattainment. This is equivalent to an expected nonattainment of the dissolved oxygen criterion of one day per year.

(3) **MIXING ZONES.** Water quality standards shall be met at every point outside of a mixing zone. The size of the mixing zone cannot be uniformly prescribed, but shall be based on such factors as effluent quality and quantity, available dilution, temperature, current, type of outfall, channel configuration and restrictions to fish movement. For toxic and organoleptic substances with water quality criteria specified in or developed pursuant to chs. NR 102 and 105, allowable dilution shall be determined as specified in ch. NR 106 in addition to the requirements specified in this subsection. As a guide to the delineation of a mixing zone, the following shall be taken into consideration:

(a) Limiting mixing zones to as small an area as practicable, and conforming to the time exposure responses of aquatic life.

(b) Providing passageways in rivers for fish and other mobile aquatic organisms.

(c) Where possible, mixing zones being no larger than 25% of the cross-sectional area or volume of flow of the stream and not extending more than 50% of the width.

(d) Final acute values specified in or developed pursuant to s. NR 105.05 for the fish and aquatic life subcategory for which the receiving water is classified not being exceeded at any point in the mixing zone.

(e) Mixing zones not exceeding 10% of a lake's total surface area.

(f) Mixing zones not interfering with spawning or nursery areas, migratory routes, nor mouths of tributary streams.

(g) Mixing zones not overlapping, but where they do, taking measures to prevent adverse synergistic effects.

(h) Restricting the pH to values greater than 4.0 s.u. and to values less than 11.0 s.u. at any point in the mixing zone for the protection of indigenous fish and fish food organisms.

(4) EXEMPTIONS. The thermal mixing zone provisions of this chapter are not applicable to municipal waste and water treatment plants, to vessels, or to discharges to enclosed harbors.

(5) RESOURCE MANAGEMENT EXEMPTIONS. Application of chemicals for water resource management purposes in accordance with statutory provisions is not subject to the requirements of the standards except in case of water used for public water supply.

(6) ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES. (a) The criteria in the Radiation Protection Code, s. HSS 157.15, shall apply to the disposal and permissible concentrations of radioactive substances.

(b) Methods used for analysis of samples shall be as set forth in ch. NR 219 unless alternative methods are specified by the department.

History: Cr. Register, September, 1973, No. 213, eff. 10-1-73; renum. (5) and (6) to be (6) and (7), cr. (5), Register, July, 1975, No. 235, eff. 8-1-75; r. and recr. (3), Register, August, 1981, No. 308, eff. 9-1-81; correction in (7) made under s. 13.93 (2m) (b) 7, Stats., cr. (4) (h), Register, September, 1984, No. 345, eff. 10-1-84; renum. from NR 102.03, r. (1), cr. (1) (b), renum. (2) to (7) to be (1) (a) to (6) and am. (2), (3) (intro.) and (d) and (6), Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89.

NR 102.06 Phosphorus. In addition to the requirements established in ch. NR 217, any wastewater discharger, regardless of population, volume or type of waste discharge, or geographic location, may be required to remove excess amounts of phosphorus. Effluent limitations for total phosphorus based on surface water quality may be established where, in the best professional judgment of the department, such limitations will result in an improvement in water quality, or preserve the quality of surface waters where long-term discharges may result in impairment of water quality. Such limitations for phosphorus shall include an evaluation of the discharges from point sources, nonpoint sources, background sources, tributaries, and a consideration of a margin of safety.

History: Cr. Register, July, 1975, No. 235, eff. 8-1-75; am. Register, October, 1986, No. 370, eff. 11-1-86; renum. from NR 102.04, Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89; am. Register, November, 1992, No. 443, eff. 12-1-92.

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NR 102.07 Lake Michigan and Lake Superior thermal standards. For Lake Michigan and Lake Superior the following thermal standards are established so as to minimize effects on the aquatic biota in the receiving waters.

(1) (a) Thermal discharges shall not raise the receiving water temperature more than 3°F above the existing natural temperature at the boundary of mixing zones established in pars. (b) and (c).

(b) 1. The mixing zone for a shoreline thermal discharge shall be the area included within the perimeter of a rectangular figure extending 1,250 feet in both directions along the shoreline from the outfall and 1,250 feet into the lake.

2. The mixing zone for an offshore thermal discharge shall be the area within a 1,000-foot radius circle with its center at the point of discharge.

(c) The department may, upon request from the owner of a source of thermal discharge, adjust the boundaries of the mixing zone established in par. (b) for that source. In no case may any mixing zone so established include an area greater than 72 acres nor may it include more than 2,800 feet of shoreline.

(2) In addition to the limitation set forth in sub. (1), but excepting the Milwaukee Harbor, Port Washington Harbor and the mouth of the Fox River, thermal discharges to Lake Michigan shall not raise the temperature of the receiving waters at the boundary of the established mixing zone above the following limits:

January	45°F	July	80°
February	45°	August	80°
March	45°	September	80°
April	55°	October	65°
May	6°	November	60°
June	70°	December	50°

History: Cr. Register, September, 1973, No. 213, eff. 10-1-73; r. and rec. Register, July, 1975, No. 235, eff. 8-1-75; renun. from NR 102.05, Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89.

NR 102.08 Mississippi river thermal standards. In addition to the standards for fish and aquatic life, the monthly average of the maximum daily temperature in the Mississippi river outside the mixing zone shall not exceed the following limits:

January	40°F	July	84°
February	40°	August	84°
March	54°	September	82°
April	65°	October	73°
May	75°	November	58°
June	84°	December	48°

History: Cr. Register, July, 1975, No. 235, eff. 8-1-75; renun. from NR 102.06, Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89.

NR 102.09 Review of thermal standards. (1) Whenever the owner of any source of thermal discharges that existed on or before July 31, 1975, in compliance with department guidelines and after opportunity for public hearing, can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the department that the mixing zone established pursuant to this chapter is more stringent than necessary to assure the protection and propagation of a balanced, indigenous population of shellfish, fish and wildlife in and on the receiving water, the department may:

(a) Impose a mixing zone with respect to such thermal discharge that will assure the protection and propagation of such a population, or

(b) Exempt such thermal discharge from the thermal requirements of this chapter provided this exemption will not endanger the propagation of such a population.

(2) Any owner desiring a review pursuant to sub. (1) shall submit a demonstration to the department no later than June 30, 1976. The department shall reach a decision no later than December 31, 1976.

(3) In the event the owner fails to make a satisfactory demonstration pursuant to sub. (1), the department shall establish a compliance date for the thermal component to be achieved no later than July 1, 1979.

(4) Whenever the owner of any source of thermal discharges that commenced on or after August 1, 1975, in compliance with department guidelines and after opportunity for public hearing, can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the department that the mixing zone established pursuant to this chapter is more stringent than necessary to assure the protection and propagation of a balanced, indigenous population of shellfish, fish and wildlife in and on the receiving water, the department may:

(a) Impose a mixing zone with respect to such thermal discharge that will assure the protection and propagation of such a population, or

(b) Exempt such thermal discharge from the thermal requirements of this chapter provided this exemption will not endanger the propagation of such a population.

(5) In the event an owner fails to make a satisfactory demonstration pursuant to sub. (4), the discharge shall be in compliance with the thermal requirements of this chapter upon commencement of the discharge.

(6) The department may require the reduction of thermal discharges or the size and configuration of a mixing zone if it finds that environmental damage is imminent or existent.

History: Cr. Register, July, 1975, No. 235, eff. 8-1-75; am. Register, February, 1977, No. 254, eff. 3-1-77; renum. from NR 102.07, Register, February, 1989, No. 398, eff. 3-1-89.

NR 102.10 Outstanding resource waters. (1) The following surface waters are designated as outstanding resource waters:

(a) *National wild and scenic rivers.* All rivers designated under the national wild and scenic rivers act, as amended, 16 USC 1271 to 1287, except those portions flowing through Indian reservations, including:

1. St. Croix river between the northern boundary of the Hudson city limits and the St. Croix flowage dam in Douglas county except that the portion of the St. Croix river from the northern boundary of the St. Croix Falls city limits to a distance one mile below the STH 243 bridge at Osceola shall be classified exceptional resource waters under s. NR 102.11.