

Water Quality

Policy Statements

If there are any differences between the posted internet versions of any documents and the signed paper versions, the signed paper versions shall be taken as correct.

Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (now called Ministry of Environment).

Policy Statements regarding Water Quality Guidelines and Objectives.

Policy: 6.10.03.02 (Original signed by G. R. Armstrong, Deputy Minister, August, 1991.)

It is the Policy of the Ministry:

That reports on ambient water quality criteria and objectives, previously approved and signed by the Deputy Minister, be approved and signed by the Assistant Deputy Minister, Programs.

That reports on ambient water quality criteria and objectives approved by the Assistant Deputy Minister, Programs, constitute official ministry policy on these aspects of water quality, and that they will be considered in any decisions affecting water quality made within the Ministry of Environment (now called Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection).

Reasons for Policy:

To enable signing and approval of the reports by the Assistant Deputy Minister, Programs, instead of the Deputy Minister without incurring any loss in the status, force or effect of the reports as statements of ministry policy.

Policy 6.10.03.03 (Original Signed by B.E. Marr, Deputy Minister, April 10, 1987)

It is the Policy of the Ministry:

That the Canadian Water Quality Guidelines issued by the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment (CCME) (formerly the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers) will be used in developing water quality criteria and objectives and in assessing water quality in British Columbia, recognizing that site-specific factors in British Columbia may necessitate modification of the CCME Guidelines to suit local circumstances.

That any water quality criterion or objective developed and approved by the ministry to take account of local circumstances or new information will take precedence over the CCME Guidelines.

Reason for Policy:

To ensure that the Canadian Water Quality Guidelines are considered in developing water quality criteria and objectives and in assessing water quality in British Columbia, in order to promote consistency across the country to the greatest possible extent.

Policy: 6.10.03.02 (Original signed by B.E. Marr, Deputy Minister, March 1985)

It is the Policy of the Ministry:

That water quality criteria, applicable province-wide, be developed for use in producing site-specific water quality objectives appropriate for designated water use classes.

That water quality objectives be established for specific bodies of fresh and estuarine surface waters and coastal marine waters of the province, as a part of the ministry's mandate to manage water quality.

That water quality objectives be set following the principle of avoiding the degradation of existing water quality, upgrading existing water quality or protecting the water quality for a designated water use.

That water quality objectives be based on water quality criteria or similar information, and on water quality assessments. Assessments will take into account the characteristics of the ambient water, the sediments, aquatic life, the stream flow regime, the water movement and contaminant loadings from point and diffuse sources on a site specific basis.

That monitoring be proposed which will allow the ministry to determine whether the objectives are being met and whether modifications are needed to make the objectives more or less restrictive.

That a long-term program of ambient water quality monitoring be established in selected important waterways of British Columbia to determine existing water quality and to monitor trends in water quality. This trend monitoring network would complement programs now in existence for administering waste management and fish management concerns. Selection of waterways will depend on their significance from a provincial, inter-provincial or international point of view.

That the Resource Quality Section of the Water Management Branch take the lead role in developing province-wide water quality criteria and site specific water quality objectives, and in proposing a long-term monitoring program. This will be done in consultation with regions, other sections of the Water Management Branch, Waste Management, Fish Management and Wildlife Management Branches and appropriate health agencies. Advice will also be sought, as required, from relevant federal and regional agencies.

That the responsibility for objectives monitoring and long-term monitoring be shared among the Waste Management, Fish Management and Water Management Programs. Water Management will generally be responsible for that monitoring which is not directly related to Waste Management or Fish Management, and which is not within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health.

Reasons for Policy:

- To determine the quality of water in important waterways and to detect changes therein which may be significant to the management of the water resource.
- To ensure that the quality of the aquatic resource is maintained.
- To guide the issuance of permits, licences and orders related to water quantity and quality.
- To assist decision makers in planning for future developments which could affect the aquatic resource.

Definitions:

Water Quality Assessment:

the collection and interpretation of data relevant to the water column, sediments and aquatic life and water uses. It includes, but may not be limited to, understanding the impact of point and non-point sources of contamination, and proposing methods of meeting water quality objectives.

Water Quality Criterion:

a maximum or minimum physical, chemical or biological characteristic of water, biota or sediment, applicable province-wide, which must not be exceeded to prevent specified detrimental effects from occurring to a water use or aquatic life, under specified environmental conditions.

Water Quality Objectives:

a criterion adapted to protect the most sensitive designated water use at a specific location with an adequate degree of safety, taking local circumstances into account.

Designated Water Use:

a use that is intended to be protected at a specific location and that is one of the five following classes:

- Drinking, public water supply and food processing
 - Aquatic life and wildlife
 - Agriculture (livestock watering and irrigation)
 - Recreation and aesthetics
 - Industrial uses (as appropriate)
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The ministry is committed to have consultation on guidelines and site-specific water quality objectives which we develop. As such, we maintain an electronic email distribution listing so that we can notify potentially-interested parties that a new draft document has been posted, and asking for feedback within a 45-day review period. There is no obligation to review any document if you are on the notification list. If you wish to be added to the notification listing, please contact the Water Protection and Sustainability Branch with your email address.

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