



FY2010 Assessment of Improving and Recovered Waters with Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)

US Environmental Protection Agency Office of Water, Washington DC
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Overview: Under the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA), pollutant-impaired waters reported to the EPA by states, territories and tribes are subjected to TMDL development and implementation in an effort to re-attain Water Quality Standards. The EPA maintains national data systems (see <http://epa.gov/waters/ir/>) and EPA issues a Strategic Plan with reporting measures that track progress in restoring impaired waters (see http://water.epa.gov/aboutow/goals_objectives/waterplan/index.cfm). Two of those measures are SP-10 and SP-11, which appear below.

Measures such as SP-10 and SP-11 provide useful national-scale summary information on progress toward restoring our nation's impaired waters. These measures, however, are used to report on progress of the entire surface water protection program rather than any of its component parts. It is also possible to aggregate information more specific to parts of the surface water program, such as the waters that specifically have TMDLs and have undergone improvement or full restoration. Below are several summary statistics about recovered and improving waters, with a focus on the waters that have approved or established TMDLs. To obtain these program-specific numbers, data from SP-10 and SP-11 reporting were combined, reaggregated and further analyzed in September 2010. Raw and reaggregated data are included in the accompanying spreadsheet.

It is important to note that the source of these numbers is the ATTAINS data system, not the Strategic Plan reporting system. Whereas EPA has developed queries to enable these metrics to be checked in ATTAINS, Strategic Plan reporting is still manually compiled at the EPA Regional level based on state information provided. The Strategic Plan should be considered the authoritative source for all national performance tracking metrics and figures. However, the ATTAINS analysis is necessary to obtain data in the more specific format relating improvement and recovery to associated TMDLs.

RECOVERING WATERS NOW SHOWING IMPROVEMENTS

A September 2010 data pull showed that, in reference to the 2002 impaired waters national baseline, **3,832** waterbody/impairment cause combinations have been thus far improved to the point that one or more of the original causes of impairment had been removed. Because some waters experienced remediation of more than one cause, this national statistic affects the somewhat smaller number of **2,625** actual waterbodies. A number of different factors may underly cause removal. In the case of TMDLs, a total of **216** of these water bodies with removed causes are associated with approved or established TMDLs (**208**) or approved TMDL alternatives (**8**).

RESTORED WATERS NOW MEETING ALL WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

A September 2010 data pull showed that, in reference to the 2002 impaired waters national baseline, **1,125** unique waterbodies formerly listed as impaired now fully attain water quality standards. In the case of TMDLs, a total of **70** of these improving waterbodies are associated with approved or established TMDLs (**70**) or approved TMDL alternatives (**0**).

INTEGRATED DATA ON TMDL EFFECTS

SP 10: Number of waterbodies identified in 2002 as not attaining water quality standards where standards are now fully attained. (cumulative)

SP-10 DATA NOTES

- 1125 records (unique List IDs alone)
- Unique List IDs: 1125
- Restored: 1125
- Match 2004: 713
- Match 2006: 509
- Match 2008: 165
- TMDL: 70
- 4B: 0
- Other: 0

SP 11: Remove the specific causes of waterbody impairment identified by states in 2002. (cumulative)

SP-11 DATA NOTES

- 3832 records (unique List ID/detailed cause combinations)
- Cause/water combinations restored: 3832
- Unique List IDs: 2625
- Match 2004: 1543
- Match 2006: 961
- Match 2008: 74
- TMDL: 208
- 4B: 4
- Other: 4

INTEGRATED ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Demonstrate the results of implemented TMDLs by annually reporting on the progress of water quality improvements resulting from TMDLs nationwide:

- Number of unique waterbody segment/pollutant combinations (i.e., TMDL-equivalent units for counting) that are now fully meeting water quality standards or are improving due to one or more impairment causes being removed: 3832
- Number of waterbody segments (unique List IDs) from the 2002 baseline that are now fully meeting water quality standards or are improving due to one or more impairment causes being removed: 2625
- Number of waterbody segments (unique List IDs) from the 2002 baseline that are now fully meeting water quality standards due to a TMDL or TMDL alternative: 70
- Number of unique waterbody segment/pollutant combinations (i.e., TMDL-equivalent units for counting) from the 2002 baseline that are improving due to one or more impairment causes being removed due to a TMDL or TMDL alternative: 216
- Number of waterbody segments (unique List IDs) from the 2002 baseline that are fully restored or improving from one or more impairment causes being removed due to a TMDL or TMDL alternative: 195

Notice

This study was performed by the US Environmental Protection Agency Office of Water in Washington, DC. The document has not undergone program review. Online publication does not signify that the contents necessarily reflect the views and policies of the USEPA. Mention of commercial or trade names does not constitute endorsement for use.

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Attachment: Assessment process diagram for annual national reporting

Attachment 1: Assessment process diagram for annual national reporting of TMDL-related water quality improvements and recoveries

(Perform annual assessment at end of FY)

