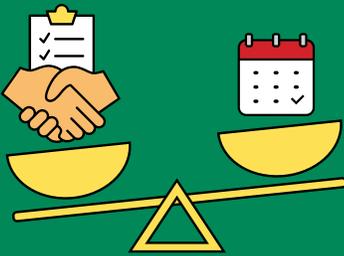


WATER QUALITY STANDARDS VARIANCES

A Clear Path to Improve Water Quality



WHAT IS A WATER QUALITY STANDARDS (WQS) VARIANCE?

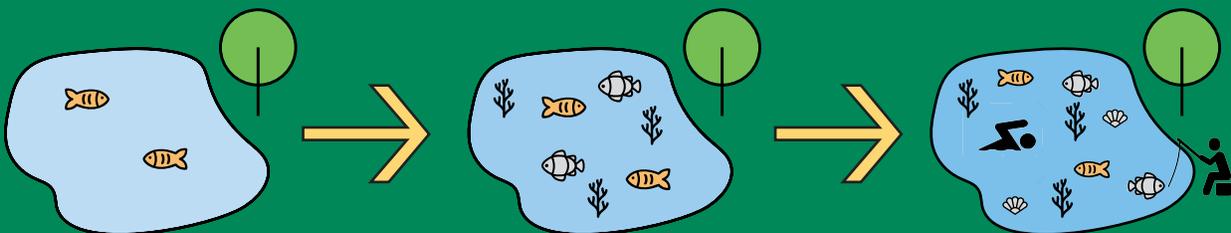


A WQS variance is a path to improve water quality over time. These time-limited WQS strike a balance between providing states/authorized tribes and dischargers the time and flexibility to make water quality improvements, with accountability measures to assure the public that progress will occur.

WHEN CAN A WQS VARIANCE HELP TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY?

A WQS variance can be used when it is uncertain how much progress can be achieved, but it is known that some progress is possible, and states/authorized tribes don't want to give up on working toward water quality improvement.

WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS OVER TIME



Current water quality

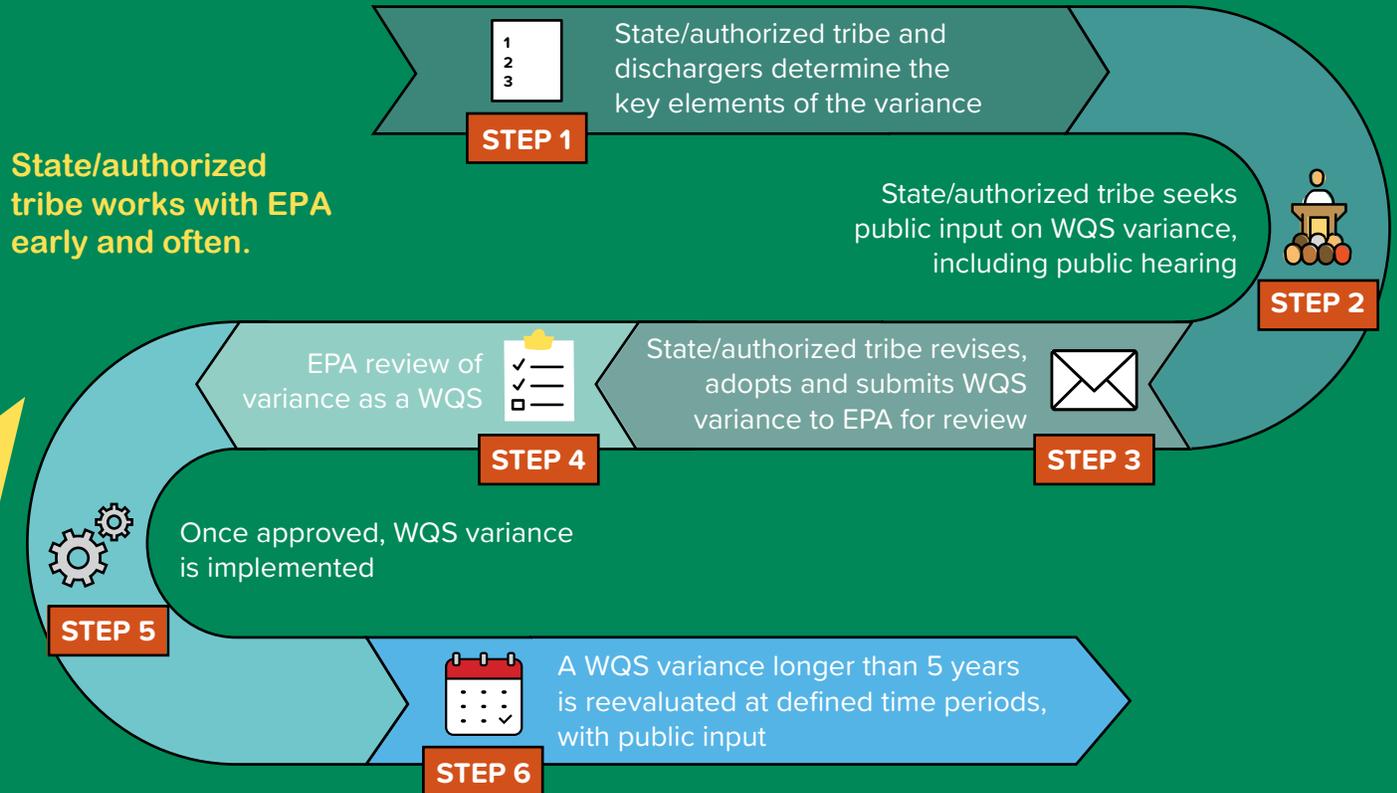
Partial water quality improvement at end of a WQS variance

Water quality goals achieved

HOW DOES A WQS VARIANCE WORK?

A WQS variance cannot make water quality worse. WQS variances focus on what can be done to improve water quality, not what can't be done.

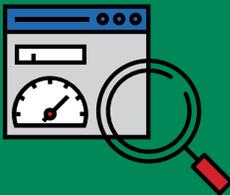
THE WQS VARIANCE PROCESS



TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

DETERMINING THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE WQS VARIANCE

State/authorized tribe and dischargers determine the scope of the WQS variance.



Investigate what pollutant control technologies and activities are available and affordable.

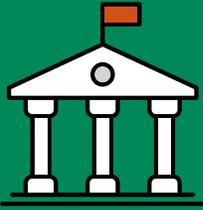


Determine how much water quality may improve based on the implementation of these technologies and activities.



Define how long it would take to implement those technologies and activities to make water quality improvements.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?



Talk to your government officials about achieving water quality improvements while balancing competing community resources.



Participate in a WQS public hearing and/or public comment period.



Provide input during WQS variance reevaluation periods.

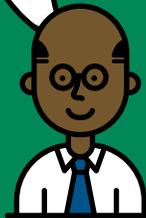
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE WQS VARIANCE TERM IS COMPLETE?

It is time to determine if further water quality improvements can be made.

Can the water quality standards now be met?



Do we need another variance?



Is a permanent change to WQS now appropriate?



For more information visit:
epa.gov/wqs-tech/water-quality-standards-variances