

Protecting Aquatic Life From Effects of Hydrologic Alteration: U.S. EPA/USGS Release Draft Technical Report

Arkansas Environmental, Energy, and Water Law Blog



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

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The United States Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Geological Survey (collectively “Agencies”) have posted in the Federal Register a Notice of Availability of a draft technical report titled *Protecting Aquatic Life From Effects of Hydrologic Alteration* (“Report”). See 81 Fed. Reg. 10620.

The Agencies have established a 60-day public comment period for the *Report*.

The Agencies rationale for the development of the *Report* is stated to be:

... because hydrologic alteration can be a contributor of impairment for water bodies that are designated to support aquatic life. Stresses on aquatic life associated with hydrologic alteration may be further exacerbated through climate change. Recent climate trends have included the change in frequency and duration of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, which can have an impact on flow and affect aquatic life.

The Agencies describe the *Report* as a “nonprescriptive framework with information to help states, tribes, territories, water resource managers, and other stakeholders responsible for the maintenance of hydrologic flow regime to quantify flow targets for the preservation of aquatic life and habitat.” The *Report* is also stated to provide information on the relationship between hydrologic condition and water quality. Examples of what some states and authorized tribes have done to address flow concerns using the Clean Water Act are provided.

The framework could also be potentially useful for translating narrative criteria and developing flow targets to protect aquatic life and habitat.

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