

Water Quality Standards Matrix/Northeastern States: NEIWPCC Report Comparing 30 Parameters



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The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (“NEIWPCC”) announced it has updated a water quality standards matrix addressing seven northeastern states.

The water quality standard matrix compares how these states regulate 30 different water quality parameters.

The states include:

- Connecticut
- Maine
- Massachusetts
- New Hampshire
- New York
- Rhode Island
- Vermont

NEIWPCC describes itself as a regional commission helping Northeastern states to preserve and advance water quality.

Section 303 of the Clean Water Act requires that all states develop water quality standards (“WQS”) for jurisdictional waters of the United States within their boundaries.

WQS serve a dual purpose. They establish the water quality goals for a specific body of water and also serve as the regulatory basis for the development of water-quality based effluent limits and strategies for individual point source discharges.

A WQS consists of three parts:

1. The designated uses of a waterbody
2. The water quality criteria (“WQC”)
3. An anti-degradation statement or policy to protect existing uses in high quality water

WQS utilize WQC which are ambient water quality conditions deemed protective for the use established for a waterbody. States are required to adopt WQC to protect designated uses. The WQC must specify maximum concentration of pollutants that may be present in the water without impairing its suitability for certain uses. However, they are sometimes expressed as narrative as opposed to numeric.

The WQC represents a judgment as to what levels, concentrations or conditions can support a desired use for a waterbody.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency periodically issues new or revised WQC. However, states can develop their own WQC if justified by technical data.

The water quality parameters addressed in the matrix include:

- Aesthetics
- Alkalinity
- Aluminum
- Aquatic Life
- Bacteria
- Chemical Constituents
- Chloride
- Color and Turbidity
- Copper – Freshwater
- Copper – Marine
- Dissolved Oxygen – Freshwater
- Dissolved Oxygen – Marine
- Mercury
- Methylmercury
- Mixing Zones
- Nitrate
- Nutrients
- pH
- Phenol
- Phosphorus
- Radioactivity
- Silt or Sand Deposits
- Sludge Deposits, Solid Refuse, Floating Solids, Oil, Grease and Scum
- Sodium
- Substances Potentially Toxic
- Sulfates
- Taste and Odor
- Temperature
- Total Dissolved Solids
- Tritium

The matrix is available as a searchable, interactive table and can be found [here](#).