

Guidelines for Listing and Delisting of Biological Data:

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) currently does not accept third party biological data for 305(b)/303(d) listing and delisting purposes for the following reasons: 1) the collection and analysis of biological data tends to be more complicated than the collection of physical or chemical data, and 2) EPD has observed that the quality of biological data submitted as part of watershed assessment and protection plans varies widely. However, a written request to resample sites listed under BIO-M or BIO-F may be submitted to EPD under the following scenarios:

1. A third party conducts restoration activities that positively impact a stream segment listed as “not supporting” for biology and have biological data they believe indicates the listed biological assemblage has been restored to “supporting” based on the current SOPs and metric analysis.
2. A third party has a site where their biological data consistently shows the site is “supporting” for at least three sampling events for the listed biological assemblage. Each event must occur at least one year apart. The same stipulations would apply for third parties wanting to list streams as “not supporting”.

All requests should include a description of restoration activities (if applicable), all field sheets, laboratory data, photos, taxa lists, and any other supporting documentation as requested by EPD. EPD will review macroinvertebrate data and will request Wildlife Resource Division (WRD) to review fish data to determine if a site revisit is warranted. EPD will coordinate with WRD regarding the possibility of resampling the site for fish.

Prior to collecting fish and/or macroinvertebrates, a scientific collecting permit must be obtained from WRD. All parties must follow the most current Georgia EPD Macroinvertebrate Biological Assessment of Wadeable Streams in Georgia - Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) (<https://epd.georgia.gov/macroinvertebrate-bioassessment-standard-operating-procedures-sop-and-metric-spreadsheets>) and/or the Standard Operating Procedures for Conducting Biomonitoring on Fish Communities in Wadeable Streams in Georgia (<https://georgiawildlife.com/StreamTeam>). When collecting fish, third parties should also read the document “Following the SOP” posted at the same website for tips on avoiding the most common mistakes made by fish assessors. In addition, please refer to the watershed assessment guidance documents (<http://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-assessment-and-protection-plan-guidance-documents>) for all required data.

Requests and documentation for resampling should be sent to:

Susan Salter
Watershed Planning and Monitoring Program
Georgia EPD
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive
Suite 1152 East
Atlanta, GA 30334
susan.salter@dnr.ga.gov

Prior Coordination

A third party may choose to coordinate its sampling plans with EPD prior to conducting biological sampling under this policy. Prior coordination is not mandatory; however, it may lessen the possibility that EPD would not accept some aspect of the data. If a third party chooses to coordinate with EPD, then it should submit a brief sampling plan to EPD (same address as above). The plan should include the name of the stream being sampled; provide the exact sampling location(s) (narrative description, latitude/longitude, and map); provide the drainage area; state which biological assemblage is being sampled (fish or macroinvertebrates); provide a proposed sampling schedule; and cite the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that will be followed.

If macroinvertebrates are being sampled, once the first round of sampling has been completed and the data analyzed, the results may be sent to EPD for review to provide us with a chance to ensure that the data is acceptable before future sampling is conducted. Those participating in macroinvertebrate sampling may also wish to take part in one of EPD's Macroinvertebrate Biological Assessment Workshops before sampling for macroinvertebrates. Information about these workshops can be found at the following web address: <http://epd.georgia.gov/georgia-epd-macroinvertebrate-biological-assessment-workshop-wadeable-streams>. As stated above, prior coordination with EPD is not mandatory and a third party has the option of collecting all the required data before sending any documentation to EPD.

Note About Changes to Multi Metric Indices:

Since EPD is working on revising the multi metric index (MMI) used to assess the health of macroinvertebrate communities, there is currently no way to translate the numeric score for a macroinvertebrate site to a narrative ranking (poor, fair, good, etc.). Until the MMI revision is completed, EPD will consider resampling sites where the macroinvertebrate score is 80 or above using the guidelines above.

Individuals/groups using the Fish Index of Biotic Integrity to assess the health of fish communities should always consult the WRD website to see if there have been changes to the Standard Operating Procedures posted there (<https://georgiawildlife.com/StreamTeam>).