

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A LISTING OF WATERBODIES PURSUANT TO
SECTION 303(d) OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT
October 9, 2015

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS AND PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given that the State of Georgia is proposing to revise the draft 2014 305(b)/303(d) list for Sounds and Harbors to move the Savannah Harbor from assessment Category 4a to Category 5R. A water is placed in Category 4a when it is impaired for one or more pollutants and all necessary Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) have been completed. A water is placed in Category 5R when it is impaired, but an alternative restoration plan is in place that is predicted to restore the water without a TMDL being completed. A description of Category 5R and its use for the Savannah Harbor is provided below.

The Clean Water Act requires that TMDLs be developed for waters not meeting any applicable water quality standard due to a pollutant. However, TMDLs may not always be the most efficient means of meeting water quality standards. In December 2013, U.S. EPA released a new framework for managing the Clean Water Act 303 (d) program responsibilities, entitled "*A Long-Term Vision for Assessment, Restoration, and Protection under the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Program*" that allows for the use of alternative approaches, as opposed to TMDLs, to meet water quality standards. When opportunities for water quality restoration may be more efficient without the development of a TMDL, a State may choose to develop and execute an alternative restoration plan. If the waterbody subsequently meets water quality standards, a TMDL will not need to be developed so long as water quality standards continue to be met. A TMDL will only be developed if the alternative restoration plan does not succeed. EPA Region IV has been piloting a new subcategory, Category 5R, within the Integrated Reporting Category 5 for waters with alternative restoration plans.

The Savannah Harbor was first listed as being impaired for dissolved oxygen (DO) on the 2002 303d list. U.S. EPA issued a TMDL for DO in 2006. GA EPD subsequently revised its criteria for DO and the revised criteria were approved by U.S. EPA in 2010. GA EPD, SC DHEC, and U.S. EPA Region IV, along with Savannah River/Harbor Discharge Group, have been working together since 2012 to develop an alternative restoration plan to meet the new DO criteria. The document "Subcategory 5R Documentation For Point Source Dissolved Oxygen Impaired Water in the Savannah River Basin, Georgia and South Carolina" has recently been completed. At this time, GA EPD is revising its draft 2014 305(b)/303(d) list for Harbors and Sounds to change the assessment category for Savannah Harbor from 4a to 5R. It is our understanding that the November 2006 EPA Savannah Harbor TMDL, which was based on the previous Georgia DO criteria, will be withdrawn upon EPA's approval of GA EPD's 303(d) list. It is

our intent to remove the Savannah Harbor from subcategory 5R once the alternative restoration plan has been implemented to meet applicable water quality standards.

A copy of this notice, the revised draft 2014 305(b)/303(d) Sounds and Harbor List, and the 5R Alternative document “Subcategory 5R Documentation For Point Source Dissolved Oxygen Impaired Water in the Savannah River Basin, Georgia and South Carolina” may be reviewed during normal business hours 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (except official State holidays or EPD office closures) at the following location: Environmental Protection Division, Watershed Protection Branch, 2 MLK, Jr. Dr. S.W., Suite 1152E, Atlanta, GA 30334, (404) 463-1511. These documents can also be found on the Georgia DNR/EPD Web page epd.georgia.gov/georgia-305b303d-list-documents.

A single copy of the above documents are available by written or phone request to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division. Please direct your call or correspondence to Thais Edwards at the address or phone number given above. If additional copies are requested, a copying charge of 10 cents per page will be assessed.

Written comments are welcomed. To ensure their consideration, written comments should be received on or before 4:30 p.m. November 10, 2015. Written comments should be addressed to Susan Salter, Watershed Protection Branch, Watershed Planning and Monitoring Program, 2 MLK, Jr. Dr. S.W., Suite 1152E, Atlanta, GA 30334. Comments may be emailed to EPDComments@dnr.state.ga.us. If you choose to e-mail your comments, please be sure to include the words “305b/303d List” somewhere in the subject line to help ensure that your comments will be forwarded to the correct staff.

For further information concerning the 5R alternative plan and the placement of the Savannah Harbor in Category 5R, contact Ms. Susan Salter, Watershed Planning and Monitoring Program, (404) 463-4917. Please bring the foregoing to the attention of persons whom you believe would be interested in this matter.