

## **GAEPD Website Notice of Bioassessment Changes For Protection Plan Long-term Monitoring**

Watershed Protection Plans are usually required to have a Long-term Monitoring Plan that consists of water quality monitoring and bioassessments. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) is modifying the frequency that bioassessments are to be performed for the Long-term Monitoring program. Bioassessments are currently required to be conducted every two years. Beginning July 1, 2015, bioassessments shall be conducted following the schedule as outlined below:

1. Once the Watershed Protection Plan is approved by GAEPD, bioassessments shall be conducted at least **twice** every five years at the monitoring sites designated for that purpose.
2. Bioassessments shall not be performed in consecutive years, and shall not be done more than three years apart.
3. All bioassessments shall include both macroinvertebrate assessments and fish assessments. However, as long as the macroinvertebrate and fish assessments follow the schedules noted above, they do not have to be conducted in the same year.

Bioassessments for the future Watershed Protection Plan Long-term Monitoring shall be conducted using the most recent standard operating procedures (SOPs), which are periodically updated. The current GAEPD macroinvertebrate SOP and Multi-Metric Index (MMI) spreadsheets can be obtained at the following website:

<http://epd.georgia.gov/macroinvertebrate-bioassessment-standard-operating-procedures-sop-and-metric-spreadsheets>

The current Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) Fish SOP and Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) Scoring Criteria can be obtained at the following website: <http://www.georgiawildlife.org/fishIBI>.

The GAEPD guidance documents for the Watershed Assessment/Watershed Protection Plan process are currently being updated. The revised Watershed Protection Plan guidance document will include the changes in bioassessment frequency for the Long-term Monitoring Plan as described above. Also, the description of Annual Reporting requirements that was included under the Watershed Protection Plan guidance will now be given as a separate guidance document. This will provide a more detailed description of what is to be included each year as part of the Annual Report submittal. The full set of updated guidance documents should be available for downloading at this website on October 1, 2015. If you have any questions regarding the changes in conducting bioassessments, or about other aspects of the Watershed Assessment/Watershed Protection Plan process, feel free to contact GAEPD. General questions or water quality questions can be addressed by:

Tyler Parsons	404-463-4924	<a href="mailto:tyler.parsons@dnr.ga.gov">tyler.parsons@dnr.ga.gov</a>
Donald Schreiber	404-463-4928	<a href="mailto:don.schreiber@dnr.ga.gov">don.schreiber@dnr.ga.gov</a>
Josh Welte	404-463-4948	<a href="mailto:josh.welte@dnr.ga.gov">josh.welte@dnr.ga.gov</a>

Questions regarding macroinvertebrate assessments can be addressed by:

Michele Brossett	404-651-8451	<a href="mailto:michele.brossett@dnr.ga.gov">michele.brossett@dnr.ga.gov</a>
Cody Jones	404-651-8452	<a href="mailto:cody.jones@dnr.ga.gov">cody.jones@dnr.ga.gov</a>

Questions regarding fish assessments can be addressed by:

Patti Lanford	770-761-3011	<a href="mailto:patti.lanford@dnr.ga.gov">patti.lanford@dnr.ga.gov</a>
Paula Marcinek	770-761-3011	<a href="mailto:paula.marcinek@dnr.ga.gov">paula.marcinek@dnr.ga.gov</a>