

Georgia's 2026 305(b)/303(d) Listing Assessment Methodology

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Part I – Data Solicitation..... | 3 |
| Part II - Data Acceptability Requirements..... | 5 |
| Part III - Data Assessment Period..... | 5 |
| Part IV - Data Collection – Areas of Focus..... | 5 |
| Part V - Data Rounding and Use of Replicate Data..... | 6 |
| Part VI – Creation and Modification of Assessment Units (AUs)..... | 6 |
| Part VII - Assessment of Waters Using the 5-Part Categorization System..... | 7 |
| Part VIII - Assessment Methodology for Making Use Support Decisions..... (Listing/Delisting Strategies) | 8 |
| A. Fecal Coliform..... | 8 |
| B. Enterococci..... | 9 |
| C. E. coli..... | 13 |
| D. Dissolved Oxygen (DO), pH, Water Temperature..... | 16 |
| E. Toxic Pollutants including metals and organics..... | 19 |
| F. Toxicity..... | 20 |
| G. Fish/Shellfish Consumption Guidelines..... | 20 |
| H. Biotic Data (Fish Bioassessments)..... | 21 |
| I. Biotic Data (Macroinvertebrate Bioassessments..... | 22 |
| J. Lakes with Site-Specific Criteria..... | 22 |
| K. Objectionable Algae (Nutrients)..... | 25 |
| L. Ammonia Toxicity..... | 25 |
| Part IX - Priorities for Action..... | 26 |
| Part X – Long-Term Vision..... | 27 |

Georgia's 2026 305(b)/303(d) Listing Assessment Methodology

The outline below provides the listing assessment methodology used for the solicitation, review, consideration, and assessment of data for Georgia's 2026 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters. Each biennial listing cycle, the Listing Assessment Methodology is updated to include needed changes and to reflect the most current Listing Guidance provided by the U.S. EPA. Each listing cycle brings new challenges in the review and assessment of data. The information that follows is intended as a guide. The methodology does not cover all possible scenarios, so best professional judgment is used along with the Listing Assessment Methodology, as needed. A best professional judgment approach is also used where insufficient information or data were available to make listing decisions.

Assessment of waters is conducted by comparing water quality data against Georgia's water quality standards found Chapter 391-3-6-.03 of Georgia's Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control. The Clean Water Act section 303(c) and Federal Regulation 40 §CFR 131.20 requires Georgia to review and revise its water quality standards from time to time, but at least once every three years. This process is known as the Triennial Review. Changes to water quality standards are adopted by Georgia's Board of Natural Resources. In accordance with 40 CFR 131.21, 65 FR 24641, April 27, 2000, newly adopted water quality standards must be approved by U.S. EPA before EPD can use them for Clean Water Act purposes (like assessing waters). Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to submit their 303(d) lists to EPA for approval by April 1 of even numbered years. Since assessing waters is a time-consuming process, Georgia has determined that assessments will be made using the EPA approved water quality standards that are in effect as of July 31 of odd numbered years. July 31st is also the date by which data for use in development of the 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters must be submitted to EPD, as described below. Assessments for the 2026 305(b)/303(d) List were made using Water Quality Standards that were the outcome of Georgia's 2019 Triennial Review that were adopted by the Board of Natural Resources on January 28, 2022, and were approved by U.S. EPA on August 31, 2022.

I. Data Solicitation

On January 30, 2025, a notice soliciting water quality data for use in the development of the 2026 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters was e-mailed to people that had signed up to be notified regarding announcements on the topics of water quality standards, Total Maximum Daily Loads, 305(b)/303(d) issues, and grant opportunities. In addition, the announcement was placed on the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's (EPD) website. The notice was placed on the webpage for the State's 305(b)/303(d) List (<https://epd.georgia.gov/water-quality-georgia>) and on the webpage that contains public announcements for the Watershed Protection Branch (<https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch-public-announcements>). The notice stated EPD was gathering water quality data and information to be used in the development of Georgia's draft 2026 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters. Any comments, data, or other information were requested to be submitted to EPD by July 31, 2025. The notice included a link to a document on EPD's website that provides information

as to the requirements for the submission and acceptance of water quality data for EPD's use in 305(b)/303(d) listing assessments.

II. Data Acceptability Requirements

In accordance with 40 CFR Part 130.7(b)(4), EPD is to evaluate all existing and readily available water quality data when assessing waters for the 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters. However, water quality data can vary in both quality and quantity. Data used for assessing waters can be placed into 3 Tiers based upon its quantity and quality.

Tier 1 data is high in both quality and quantity and is used for assessing whether a waterbody is meeting its designated uses or not. In regard to data quality, this data will have been collected and analyzed in accordance with the Quality Control/Quality Assurance requirements in EPD's [Planning and Documentary Protocols for Water Quality Assessments](#) and [Quality Assurance Project Plan](#). In the case of data collected by our sister agencies (Wildlife Resources Division, Coastal Resources Division, Georgia's Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division, and USGS), the data will have been collected in accordance with their quality assurance/quality control guidelines. In the case of data collected by third parties, the data would have been collected in accordance with an EPD approved Sampling and Quality Assurance Plan (SQAP) as described in Chapter 391-3-6-.03(13) of Georgia Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control. As for data quantity, Tier 1 data will meet or exceed the "preferred minimum data set" provided in Section VII below.

Tier 2 data is still of high quality (it meets the same quality standards as Tier 1 data) but does not meet the "preferred minimum data set." Tier 2 data are evaluated closely to determine whether the data quantity is sufficient to be used to assess the condition of the waterbody (i.e., determine if the designated use is being met or not) or if the waterbody needs to be placed in Category 3 (assessment pending) until additional data are collected. EPD needs to consider a number of factors when making this determination. These include evaluating: how close the data set is to the preferred minimum set; the reason the data set did not meet the preferred minimum (i.e. did the stream dry up part of the year making sampling impossible some months); the seasonality of the data with regards to the parameter being assessed; the data values in relation to the water quality criteria for that parameter; and results of other data including historical data at the site.

Tier 3 data is data that does not meet data quality requirements described under Tier 1. This data is not used for 305(b)/303(d) listing purposes but may be used for screening purposes to help EPD select sites for future sampling. Data collected by third parties that was not collected under an approved SQAP and who cannot show their data were collected and analyzed in such a manner that it would have received SQAP approval, fall into Tier 3. In addition, when EPD, USGS, or other agencies collect data and these data do not meet their respective quality guidelines, then these data are not used for listing purposes.

III. Data Assessment Period

All readily available data and information for the calendar years 2023-2025 were considered in the development of Georgia's 2026 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters. For data collected in 2025, typically only data from January through June were available for assessment. In addition, data from 2020 through 2022 were considered along with the 2023 through 2025 data, when assessing a waterbody, if the data set were continuous. For instance, if data were collected every year from 2020-2025, then the data from all these years were used in the assessment. On the other hand, if data were collected in 2020, but not again until 2024, then only the 2024 data were used in the assessment, since conditions may have changed in the intervening years. There are instances where EPD may choose not to use all years of a consecutive data set in the assessment of a waterbody. For example, where a local government or group has conducted specific water quality improvement efforts in the watershed of a waterbody and the data collected before and after the improvement projects provide a clear indication the project has succeeded in improving water quality, EPD may choose only to use data collected after implementation of the water quality improvements. It is the responsibility of the local government or group to submit specific documentation to EPD including a description of the improvement project, its location, and the date of implementation, along with the water quality data supporting the assertion the project has been successful. Currently, Georgia has over 3,000 waterbodies on its 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters. It is not possible to obtain new data for all these waters every two years. If no new data were collected between 2023 and 2025, then the assessment of the water would remain the same as it was on the 2024 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters.

IV. Data Collection and Areas of Focus

Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act requires States to assess the quality of their waters. To meet this goal, Georgia collects water quality data for a number of physical/chemical parameters such as dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, bacteria, metals, pesticides, etc. Biological data is also collected at some sites (fish or macroinvertebrates) to assess the health of the aquatic community. Fish tissue data is collected at some sites to enable the State to detect concentrations of toxic chemicals in fish that may be harmful to consumers and to guide appropriate future actions to protect public health and the environment. The goal of the State's monitoring program is to collect data that accurately represents the condition of the waterbody that can vary throughout the year. The State's monitoring program is designed to collect data in different seasons to capture the impact of seasonality on the data. In addition, water quality samples are collected in a random fashion such that we are likely to obtain samples in both wet and dry weather. Samples are not taken if conditions are dangerous to personnel or if there is no visible water flow in a stream to be sampled.

EPD used data collected from across the state to develop its 2026 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters. EPD currently has monitoring staff located in five offices (Atlanta, Cartersville, Brunswick, Tifton, and Augusta). By spreading its monitoring staff out

in different regions, EPD is better able to monitor waters throughout the State each year. In addition, EPD receives data from other GA DNR Divisions including Georgia's Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia's Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division, and Georgia's Coastal Resources Division. Additionally, USGS and Columbus Water Works collect water quality data for EPD under contract. Columbus Water Works collects data in the area near Columbus. USGS collects data State-wide. EPD also accepts data from outside groups. This data may have been taken from anywhere in the State. Finally, EPD may conduct special projects and the data from these special projects can also be used for assessment purposes.

V. Data Rounding and Use of Replicate Data

When assessing waters, EPD compares water quality data with their respective water quality criteria. Water quality data for a given parameter will be rounded to the same number of significant digits as the criterion for that parameter before the two are compared for the purpose of making listing determinations. Should it be necessary to perform mathematical operations with the data before comparison with the appropriate criterion (such as the calculation of an average of a number of data points), EPD will keep extra decimal places throughout the calculations and then round to the appropriate number of decimal places at the end. This practice prevents the propagation of rounding errors throughout the calculation.

In accordance with the Georgia [Quality Assurance Project Plan \(QAPP\)](#) section B5.2, Georgia EPD associates will collect replicate samples at 10% of all sample events (this is subject to change based on the project plan and/or lab constraints). Results of replicate sampling are not used directly for assessment of waters. Instead, replicate data are used as part of our Quality Assurance/Quality Control Procedures to help quantify precision of data.

VI. Creation and Modification of Assessment Units (AUs)

Since waterbodies (such as streams and rivers) are typically many miles long, it is usually not feasible to assess a whole waterbody as a single entity. Therefore, waterbodies are normally broken into smaller portions called Assessment Units (AUs). Each row in the 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters represents an AU.

If data are collected at a monitoring location that is not on an established AU, EPD will create a new AU. Starting at the monitoring location, the assessor will look upstream to find the start of the new AU. This would be where we believe it would be reasonable to think that water quality may change (for instance the starting point could be the first large tributary that enters the stream upstream from the monitoring point). Other starting places could be at an NPDES discharge, a change in land use, or at an inline pond (e.g. dam). The same types of conditions are used to establish the ending point of the new AU (e.g. large tributary, an NPDES discharge, a change in land use, or at an inline pond (e.g. dam), etc.) downstream of the monitoring location.

An AU ID is created for each AU. This is a unique alpha-numeric ID for the water that can be used to track it over time on the 305(b)/303(d) List of Waters. The AU ID is a 15-digit code starting with “GAR” followed by the HUC 10 that the AU is in, followed by 2 digits (01, 02, 03, etc.). If an AU extends over more than one HUC 10, then the HUC 10 at the end of the AU is the one that is used.

While AUs and AU IDs are typically stable from one assessment cycle to the next, there are times when An AU and AU ID may change. The most common change is when an AU is split. An AU may be split for several reasons. For instance, if data are collected at a different monitoring locations within an AU and the data at the different monitoring locations would result in different assessment decisions, the AU will be split. An AU may also be split if the designated use of only a portion of the AU is changed during the Triennial Review process. If an AU is split, then each portion of the split AU is assigned a new AU ID.

VII. Assessment of Waters Using the 5-Part Categorization System

U.S. EPA developed a five-part categorization system for all states and tribes to use when developing their 305(b)/303(d) Lists of Waters. EPD first adopted the five-part categorization system with the 2008 305(b)/303(d) report. Assessed waters are placed into one or more of five categories as described below:

Category 1 – Data indicate waters are meeting their designated use(s).

Category 2 – A waterbody has more than one designated use and data indicate at least one designated use is being met, but there is insufficient evidence to determine whether all uses are being met.

Category 3 – There is insufficient data/information to make a determination as to whether or not the designated use(s) is being met.

Category 3N – This is a subcategory of Category 3. Additional data/information are needed to determine if violations of water quality criteria are due to Natural Conditions.

Category 3S – This is a subcategory of Category 3. It is used for intermittent streams where there are insufficient data to make an assessment on use support (due to the stream being dry much of the year), but where all the data collected are meeting criteria.

Category 4a – Data indicate at least one designated use is not being met, but a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) has been completed for the pollutant(s) causing a waterbody not to meet its use(s).

Category 4b - Data indicate at least one designated use is not being met, but there are actions in place (other than a TMDL) that are predicted to lead to compliance with water quality standards.

Category 4c - Data indicate at least one designated use is not being met, but the impairment is not caused by a pollutant.

Category 5 - Data indicate at least one designated use is not being met and TMDL(s) need to be completed for one or more pollutants.

Category 5R - Data indicate at least one designated use is not being met; however, TMDL development is deferred while an advanced restoration plan is pursued. If the

advanced restoration plan is not successful, then the water will be placed back in Category 5 and a TMDL will be developed.

A waterbody will be assessed as supporting its designated use (Category 1); not supporting its use (Category 4 or 5); or assessment pending (Category 2 or 3). Waters in Category 5 or 5R are considered to be on the State's 303(d) list since the 303(d) list is a list of impaired waters that still need to have a TMDL completed. It is possible for a waterbody to be in Category 4 and 5 at the same time if it is impaired by more than one pollutant. For instance, if a waterbody were impaired for copper and dissolved oxygen and a TMDL had been completed only for dissolved oxygen, then the waterbody will be placed in Category 4a for dissolved oxygen and Category 5 for copper.

VIII. Assessment Methodology for Making Use Support Decisions (Listing/Delisting Strategies)

The following provides an outline of the assessment methodology employed during the 2026 Listing Cycle. The conditions under the header "listing" describe what data are needed to place a waterbody on the "not supporting" list for a specific parameter. The conditions under the header "delisting" describe what data are needed to remove a specific parameter from the "not supporting" list. Generally, the data required to "delist" a parameter are the same as would be required to assess a waterbody as "not supporting" its use for the parameter in question. The methodology below also describes a number of situations that would result in a waterbody being placed in Category 3 "assessment pending."

A "preferred minimum data set" is provided for many of the parameters below. If the quantity of data available is less than the "preferred minimum set," EPD uses best professional judgment to determine if there are sufficient data available to make an assessment of use support or if the waterbody should be placed in Category 3 until more data are collected. In the case of intermittent streams, where the preferred minimum data set is unlikely to ever be met, the water is placed in Category 3S if all data collected are meeting criteria, but the data quantity is insufficient to make an assessment on use support. Best professional judgment is also used in cases where data are determined to be suspect.

- A. Fecal Coliform Bacteria:** Beginning with the 2024 Listing Cycle, fecal coliform bacteria data are only used to assess waters located within Shellfish Growing areas on the coast. This is because *E. coli* and enterococci were adopted as bacteria indicators in place of fecal coliform bacteria for the Fishing and Drinking Water uses as part of the 2019 Triennial Review. *E. coli* and enterococci had previously been adopted as the bacteria indicators for waters with a Recreation use as part of the 2013 Triennial Review. Preferred minimum data set for assessing fecal coliform in shellfish growing areas: at least 30 samples of fecal coliform.

1. Listing –

- a. Waters within “shellfish growing areas”: Georgia’s Coastal Resources Division (CRD) designates certain waters of the State as being shellfish growing areas. CRD designates shellfish harvesting areas within the growing areas. CRD monitors these waters for fecal coliform contamination in accordance with FDA requirements. A geometric mean using the most recent 30 data points is calculated and this mean is compared against FDA’s criterion of 14 MPN/100 mL. In addition, the 90th percentile of the 30 samples is calculated and compared with FDA’s criteria of 43 MPN/100 mL for a five-tube decimal dilution test; 49 MPN/100 mL for a three-tube decimal dilution test or 31 CFU/100 mL for a MF (mTEC) test.
 1. Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting their designated use if the geometric mean of the most recent 30 samples is greater than 14/100 mL MPN or if the 90th percentile exceeds the values provided above based upon the testing method used.

2. Delisting –

- a. Waters within “shellfish growing areas”
 1. Waters are eligible for delisting for fecal coliform bacteria if the geometric mean of the last 30 data points is less than or equal to 14 MPN/100 mL and the 90th percentile of the last 30 data points does not exceed the values provided above based upon the testing method used.

B. Enterococci: enterococci is the bacterial indicator species for coastal and estuarine waters (waters with a salinity of 0.5 parts per thousand and greater). Enterococci will also be used as the bacteria indicator for tidally influenced waters (those that may be fresh sometimes and estuarine sometimes depending upon the tide). This will prevent having a mixture of data types for the water. EPA’s 2012 Recreational Water Quality Criteria for enterococci are the same value whether the water is fresh or marine. Georgia’s enterococci criteria consist of both a geometric mean and a statistical threshold value (STV). The geometric mean and STV apply to data collected within a 30-day period. For waters with a designated use other than Recreation the criteria are seasonal and are: May – October (geometric mean 35 count/100 mL, STV 130 count/100 mL); November – April (geometric mean 74 count/100 mL, STV 273 count/100 mL). For waters with a use of Recreation, the criteria are equal to the May – October values above for the whole year.

Depending upon how frequently bacteria data are collected, EPD uses the geometric mean, STV, or both to assess water quality. Coastal beaches are sampled at different frequencies depending upon how many people use them for recreation and their proximity to potential pollution sources. Beaches are sampled either weekly (year-round); monthly (from April to October) or quarterly (if they are under a permanent advisory). Coastal waters other than beaches are generally sampled monthly. If the water is sampled by boat, then monthly samples are collected from April to October. Preferred minimum data set – For coastal beaches: 10 geometric means for coastal beaches sampled weekly and 10 months of data for those sampled monthly. For other coastal waters sampled by boat – 10 months of data. If quarterly geometric mean data were collected, the preferred minimum data set would be four geometric means with at least 3 samples collected in each 30-day period.

1. Listing –

- a. Monthly Samples: Since only 1 sample is taken per month, there are not enough data available to calculate a meaningful geometric mean. Instead, the results of each monthly sample are compared with the STV.
 1. If more than 10% of the monthly data exceed the STV, a water is assessed as **not** supporting its use designation.
- b. Weekly Samples: (For beaches or other waters) sampled weekly, a geometric mean is calculated for each calendar month (if there were at least 3 samples taken during the calendar month). Each geometric mean is compared with the criteria. In addition, the individual data points from each calendar month are compared against the STV. If one or more of the individual data points within a calendar month exceeds the STV, then that calendar month exceeds the STV.
 1. Waters are determined **not** to be supporting their designated use if more than 10% of the geometric means exceed the geometric mean portion of the criterion and/or if the STV is exceeded in more than 10% of the 30-day sampling periods.
- c. Quarterly Geometric Means (16 samples per year): For sites monitored quarterly for geometric means, a geometric mean is calculated for each quarter if there are at least 3 samples taken in a 30-day period. Each geometric mean is compared with the criteria. In addition, the individual data points collected in each 30-day period are compared with the STV.

1. Waters are determined **not** to be supporting their designated use if more than 10% of the geometric means exceed the geometric mean portion of the criterion and/or if the STV is exceeded in more than 10% of the 30-day sampling periods.
- d. Mixture of Sampling Types
1. If during the last five years, data are collected such that some years geometric means can be calculated and some years they cannot, then EPD assesses each data type separately as described above. If either the geometric mean or STV data indicate that a water is impaired, then the water will be listed as impaired.
- e. Permanent Beach Advisory: Beaches under a permanent beach advisory are only sampled quarterly (4 samples per year). Beaches under a permanent beach advisory are assessed as **not** supporting their use designation based solely on the fact that a permanent advisory is in place.
- f. Use of Both *E. coli* and Enterococci Data at a Given Monitoring Location: Rarely, both *E. coli* and enterococci data will be available at a single location. This is generally the case in coastal areas where it was uncertain if a water was fresh or estuarine when sampling efforts began since it can be hard to know how far upstream saltwater will flow at high tides throughout the year. EPD will use enterococci data that was collected in freshwater for assessment purposes since EPA's 2012 Recreational Water Quality Criteria for enterococci are the same whether the water is fresh or marine. *E. coli* data will not be used for assessment if it is collected in water that is estuarine (waters with a salinity of 0.5 parts per thousand and greater) at the time the bacteria sample was collected. This is because the *E. coli* criteria are not applicable to marine waters and EPA's 2012 Recreational Water Quality Criteria does not contain a marine criteria for *E. coli*.
1. If both *E. coli* and enterococci data are available at a site that is freshwater, the results for each bacteria type will be compared against their respective criteria. In most cases this will mean comparing bacteria data against the appropriate STV. Results for different bacteria types cannot be combined to calculate a geometric mean. The number of violations for each bacteria type will be combined. Waters are determined **not** to be supporting their designated use if more than 10% of the geometric means exceed the geometric mean portion of the criterion and/or if the STV is exceeded in more than 10% of the 30-day sampling periods.

2. Delisting –

- a. Monthly Samples: Since only 1 sample is taken per month, there are not enough data available to calculate a meaningful geometric mean. Instead, the results of each monthly sample are compared with the STV.
 - 1. If 10% or less of the monthly data exceed the STV, a water is eligible for delisting.
- b. Weekly Samples (for Beaches or other waters): A geometric mean is calculated for each calendar month (if there were at least 3 samples taken during the calendar month). Each geometric mean is compared with the criteria. In addition, the individual data points from each calendar month are compared against the STV. If one or more of the individual data points within a calendar month exceeds the STV, then that calendar month exceeds the STV.
 - 1. If 10% or less of the geometric means exceed the geometric mean portion of the criterion and if the STV is exceeded in 10% or less of the calendar months, the water is eligible for delisting.
- c. Quarterly Geometric Means: A geometric mean is calculated for each 30-day sampling period (if there were at least 3 samples taken). Each geometric mean is compared with the criteria. In addition, the individual data points from each 30-day sampling period are compared against the STV. If one or more of the individual data points within a 30-day period exceeds the STV, then that 30-day sampling period exceeds the STV.
 - 1. If 10% or less of the geometric means exceed the criterion and if the STV is exceeded in 10% or less of the 30-day sampling periods, the water is eligible for delisting.
- d. Mixture of Sampling Types
 - 1. If during the last five years, data are collected such that some years geometric means can be calculated and some years they cannot, then EPD assesses each data type separately as described above. If both the geometric means and STV portions of the criteria are exceeded 10% or less of the time, then the water is eligible for delisting.
- e. Permanent Beach Advisory: Beaches under a permanent beach advisory are not eligible for delisting.

f. Use of Both *E. coli* and Enterococci Data at a Given Monitoring Location: Rarely, both *E. coli* and enterococci data will be available at a single location. This is generally the case in coastal areas where it was uncertain if a water was fresh or estuarine when sampling efforts began since it can be hard to know how far upstream saltwater will flow at high tides throughout the year. EPD will use enterococci data that was collected in freshwater for assessment purposes since EPA's 2012 Recreational Water Quality Criteria for enterococci are the same whether the water is fresh or marine. *E. coli* data will not be used for assessment if it is collected in water that is estuarine (waters with a salinity of 0.5 parts per thousand and greater) at the time the bacteria sample was collected. This is because the *E. coli* criteria are not applicable to marine waters and EPA's 2012 Recreational Water Quality Criteria does not contain a marine criteria for *E. coli*.

1. If both *E. coli* and enterococci data are available at a site that is freshwater, the results for each bacteria type will be compared against their respective criteria. In most cases this will mean comparing bacteria data against the appropriate STV. Results for different bacteria types cannot be combined to calculate a geometric mean. The number of violations for each bacteria type will be combined. If 10% or less of the geometric means exceed the geometric mean portion of the criterion and if the STV is exceeded in 10% or less of the calendar months, the water is eligible for delisting.

3. Swimming Advisories – Swimming Advisories are issued by County Health Departments as described below. Swimming Advisories are not used for assessment purposes.

a. Beach swimming advisories are issued when the most recent enterococci data exceeds the Beach Action Value (BAV) of 70 CFU/100 mL.

b. The swimming advisory is lifted when new data shows the enterococci concentration is less than 70 CFU/100 mL.

C. ***E. Coli***: *E. coli* is the bacterial indicator species used for freshwater streams, lakes, and beaches. The criteria consist of both a geometric mean and a statistical threshold value (STV). The geometric mean and STV apply to data collected within a 30-day period. For waters with a designated use other than Recreation the criteria are seasonal and are: May – October (geometric mean 126 count/100 mL, STV 410 count/100 mL); November – April (geometric mean 265 count/100 mL, STV 861 count/100 mL). For

waters with a use of Recreation, the criteria are equal to the May – October values for the whole year.

Depending upon how frequently bacteria data are collected, EPD uses the geometric mean, STV, or both to assess water quality. EPD typically measures *E. coli* in lakes monthly (April – October). These samples are taken offshore (not at a beach). While data collected in lakes does not meet the preferred minimum data set as described below, data is collected every year for most lakes. Therefore, there are sufficient data to make listing decisions. Beginning in 2024, EPD began to sample streams monthly for *E. coli* rather than collecting data for the calculation of quarterly geometric means. Since data is collected monthly, data will be compared against the STV only. EPD began monthly sampling because a review of historical *E. coli* data showed similar assessment results whether data were compared against the geometric mean or STV. Moving to monthly sampling will allow EPD to collect *E. coli* data from additional sites and will also free staff to conduct other sampling projects. Georgia’s Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division (Parks Division) samples their beaches weekly from mid-April to Labor Day. Preferred minimum data set for data collected monthly: 12 monthly samples per year. Preferred minimum data set for data collected weekly: 4 geometric means. Each geometric mean is to consist of at least 3 samples collected in a 30-day period. If quarterly geometric mean data were collected, the preferred minimum data set would be four geometric means with at least 3 samples collected in each 30-day period.

1. Listing –

a. Monthly Samples: Since only 1 sample is taken per month, there are not enough data available to calculate a meaningful geometric mean. Instead, the results of each monthly sample are compared with the STV.

1. If more than 10% of the monthly data exceed the STV, a water is assessed as **not** supporting its use designation.

b. Quarterly Geometric Means: A geometric mean is calculated for each 30-day sampling period (if there were at least 3 samples taken). Each geometric mean is compared with the criteria. In addition, the individual data points from each 30-day sampling period are compared against the STV. If one or more of the individual data points within a 30-day period exceeds the STV, then that 30-day sampling period exceeds the STV.

1. Waters are determined **not** to be supporting their designated use if more than 10% of the geometric means exceed the criterion

and/or if the STV is exceeded in more than 10% of the 30-day sampling periods.

c. Weekly Samples (Parks Division Freshwater Beach data): A geometric mean is calculated for each calendar month (if there were at least 3 samples taken during the calendar month). Each geometric mean is compared with the criteria. In addition, the individual data points from each calendar month are compared against the STV. If one or more of the individual data points within a calendar month exceeds the STV, then that calendar month exceeds the STV.

1. Beaches are determined **not** to be supporting their designated use if more than 10% of the geometric means exceed the criterion and/or if the STV is exceeded in more than 10% of the calendar months.

d. Mixture of Sampling Types

1. If during the last five years, some years have geometric means available and other years only have monthly data available, then EPD assesses each data type separately as described above. Waters are determined **not** to be supporting their designated use if more than 10% of the geometric means exceed the criterion and/or if the STV is exceeded in more than 10% of the 30-day sampling periods.

2. Delisting –

a. Monthly Samples: Since only 1 sample is taken per month, there are not enough data available to calculate a meaningful geometric mean. Instead, the results of each monthly sample are compared with the STV.

1. If 10% or less of the monthly data exceed the STV, a water is eligible for delisting.

b. Quarterly Geometric Means: A geometric mean is calculated for each 30-day sampling period (if there were at least 3 samples taken). Each geometric mean is compared with the criteria. In addition, the individual data points from each 30-day sampling period are compared against the STV. If one or more of the individual data points within a 30-day period exceeds the STV, then that 30-day sampling period exceeds the STV.

1. If 10% or less of the geometric means exceed the criterion and if the STV is exceeded in 0% or less of the 30-day sampling periods, the water is eligible for delisting.
- c. Weekly Samples (Parks Division Freshwater Beach data): A geometric mean is calculated for each calendar month (if there were at least 3 samples taken during the calendar month). Each geometric mean is compared with the criteria. In addition, the individual data points from each calendar month are compared against the STV. If one or more of the individual data points within a calendar month exceeds the STV, then that calendar month exceeds the STV.
1. If 10% or less of the geometric means exceed the criterion and if the STV is exceeded in 10% or less of the calendar months, the beach is eligible for delisting.
- d. Mixture of Sampling Types
1. If during the last five years, some years have geometric means available and other years only have monthly data available, then EPD assesses each data type separately as described above. If 10% or less of the geometric means exceed the criterion and if 10% or less of the 30-day sampling periods have values that exceed the STV, the water is eligible for delisting.

D. Dissolved Oxygen (DO), pH, Water Temperature: preferred minimum data set – 12 samples in a 12-month period with 1 or 2 samples collected per month. Normally only discrete data is available for assessment. T, DO, and pH data for assessment purposes are collected at a depth of one meter, or if the depth of the water is less than 2 meters, the data is collected at mid-depth. A single instantaneous reading of DO is taken at a site each time the site is visited. In the case of discrete data, the in-situ DO data is compared against the daily minimum criteria. Sometimes continuous data may be available for assessment. Continuous data is when a probe is left in the water for a long period of time and data is recorded multiple times per day. Continuous data may be collected for an entire year or only a portion of a year. Data must be collected in the critical period if it is to be used for assessment purposes. In the case of continuous data, both the daily average and daily minimum data would be compared against the criteria. The critical period for temperature and DO is May-October. The parameter pH does not have a critical period.

The DO criteria are a daily average of 5.0 mg/L and no less than 4.0 mg/L. In the case of waters designated as trout streams by the Wildlife Resources Division the DO criteria are daily average of 6.0 mg/L and no less than 5.0 mg/L. The pH criteria are a minimum of 6.0 and a maximum of 8.5. Some

lakes have site-specific pH criteria. These can be found in our Rules and Regulations at 391-3-6-.03(17). Water temperature is not to exceed 90° F.

1. Listing* –

a. Dissolved Oxygen – One year of available data or multiple consecutive years of available data:

1. Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting use designation if more than 10% of the data do not meet the water quality criteria (unless the conditions in sections 2 or 3 below are met). In the case of continuous data, a waterbody would be determined **not** to be supporting its use if more than 10% of the data in the critical period exceeds the criteria.
2. In the case where the DO criteria are not met more than 10% of the time, but where a “natural” dissolved oxygen concentration has been established, then the dissolved oxygen data are compared against the established “natural” dissolved oxygen concentration. If any of the data points are less than the “natural” dissolved oxygen concentration, then the waterbody is determined **not** to be supporting its designated use. If none of the DO data are less than the “natural” DO, then the waterbody is determined to be “supporting” its use (as far as DO is concerned).
3. Chapter 391-3-6-.03(7) of the Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control recognizes some waters of the State “naturally” will not meet the instream criteria in the Rules and this situation does not constitute a violation of water quality standards. Before assessing a water as being impaired for DO, EPD needs to determine that low DO is not a result of natural conditions. Many waters in Georgia, specifically areas in South Georgia and near the Coast, have “natural” dissolved oxygen concentrations below the State’s standard dissolved oxygen criteria (daily average of 5.0 mg/l and an instantaneous minimum of 4.0 mg/l). If a waterbody does not meet the DO criteria more than 10% of the time and when it is anticipated the low dissolved oxygen condition is natural and if a “natural” dissolved oxygen has not been established yet, then EPD will place the waterbody in Category 3N until work is completed that establishes the “natural” dissolved oxygen concentration for the waterbody. The measured dissolved oxygen data will then be compared with the “natural” dissolved oxygen concentration and an assessment will be made as to whether the waterbody is meeting its designated use.

- b. Water Temperature, pH – One year or multiple consecutive years of available data:
1. Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting use designation if more than 10% of the data do not meet water quality criteria (unless the conditions in sections 2, 3, or 4 below are met). In the case of continuous data, a waterbody would be determined **not** to be supporting its use if more than 10% of the data in the critical period exceeds the criteria.
 2. Chapter 391-3-6-.03(7) of the Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control recognizes some waters of the State “naturally” will not meet the instream criteria in the Rules and this situation does not constitute a violation of water quality standards. Georgia has many blackwater streams. The pH of blackwater streams is naturally low. If a waterbody has been identified as a blackwater stream, then it is not listed as impaired if greater than 10% of the pH measurements are less than minimum pH criterion of 6.0, as long as there is no point source or land use issues that may be contributing to the low pH status of the stream. Until more definitive criteria for defining blackwater streams are developed, EPD will use dissolved organic carbon (DOC) or total organic carbon (TOC) concentrations along with field observations of water color to assess a stream as being blackwater. The water color should be described as tannic and the DOC/TOC is to be 10 mg/L or greater.
 3. Obtaining accurate pH measurements in waters with low conductivity ($<100 \mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$) can be difficult based on how pH meters work. Beginning in 2025, a new sampling methodology for pH was implemented. When instream conductivity is $< 100 \mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$, a sample of water is to be collected in a bucket and KCl added to bring the conductivity over $100 \mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$. pH would then be measured and recorded. Waters were placed in Category 3 when more than 10% of the data is less than 6.0 standard units and where instream conductivity is $< 100 \mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$, but where the new methodology was not used. These waters will need to be resampled using the new methodology before pH can be assessed.
 4. EPD believes that waters with low alkalinity ($< 20 \text{ mg}/\text{L}$ as CaCO_3) may have naturally low pH. Until it can be established whether waters with low alkalinity have naturally low pH, pH will be placed in Category 3N if alkalinity is less than $20 \text{ mg}/\text{L}$ as CaCO_3 .

2. Delisting –
 - a. Dissolved Oxygen – One year or multiple consecutive years of available data:
 1. Waters are eligible for delisting for DO if 10% or less of the data are lower than the water quality criteria. In the case of continuous data, a waterbody would be eligible for delisting if 10% or less of the data in the critical period exceeds the criteria.
 2. In the case where the DO criteria are not met more than 10% of the time, but where a “natural” dissolved oxygen concentration has been established, the instream DO data is compared against the “natural” DO. If no violations of the natural dissolved oxygen concentration occur, the segment is eligible for delisting.
 - b. Water Temperature, pH – One year or multiple consecutive years of available data:
 1. Waters are eligible for delisting for temperature or pH if 10% or less of the data does not meet the water quality criteria. In the case of continuous data, a waterbody would be eligible for delisting if 10% or less of the data in the critical period exceeds the criteria.

E. Toxic Pollutants found in Chapter 391-3-6-.03(5)(e)(i-iv) including metals and organics: preferred minimum data set – 4 samples in a 12-month period (2 winter, 2 summer). The criteria for many of the metals (Chapter 391-3-6-.03(5)(e)(ii)) are hardness dependent (i.e. the criteria changes depending upon the hardness of the water). When metal samples are collected, hardness data are also collected. The criteria for metals are calculated using the hardness data collected at the same time the metals data are collected. Some parameters in (Chapter 391-3-6-.03(5)(e)(ii)) have both acute and chronic criteria assigned. Water quality data are compared to both the acute and chronic criteria as described below.

1. Listing –
 - a. For parameters that have both acute and chronic criteria: Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting their use designation if one sample exceeds the acute criteria in a three-year period or if more than one sample exceeds the chronic criteria in three years.

- b. For parameters that have only one criterion (e.g. the criterion is not labeled as acute or chronic): Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting their use designation if more than one sample exceeds the criteria in a three-year period.

2. Delisting –

- a. For parameters that have both acute and chronic criteria : Waters are eligible for delisting if no exceedances of the acute criteria occur and no more than one exceedance of the chronic criteria occurs in three years.
- b. For parameters that have only one criterion (e.g. the criterion is not labeled as acute or chronic), waters are eligible for delisting if no more than one exceedance of the criterion occurs in a three-year period.

F. Toxicity:

1. Listing –

- a. Acute or Chronic toxicity tests conducted on municipal or industrial effluent samples and receiving waters – Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting use designation if:
 - 1. Effluent toxicity test(s) consistently predict in-stream toxicity at critical 7Q10 low stream flow and/or if toxicity tests performed on receiving waters consistently indicate the waterbody is toxic.

2. Delisting –

- a. New data with a facility consistently passing WET test(s) (if listing originated based on effluent toxicity test results) are eligible for delisting.
- b. New data with receiving waters consistently passing toxicity test(s) (if listing originated based on stream toxicity test results) are eligible for delisting.

G. Fish/Shellfish Consumption Guidelines:

1. Listing –

- a. All Fish/Shellfish Tissue Contaminants Except Mercury:

1. Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting use designation if the State’s fish consumption guidelines document recommends consumption needs to be limited or if no consumption is recommended.
- b. Fish/Shellfish Tissue – Mercury:
 1. Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting their use designation if the Trophic-Weighted Residue Value (calculated as described in the [October 19, 2001 EPD “Protocol”](#)), is in excess of Georgia’s water quality criterion of 0.3 mg/kg wet weight mercury. Waters where the calculated Trophic-Weighted Residue Value for mercury is between 0.25 mg/kg and 0.30 mg/kg wet weight total are put in Category 3. The 2001 protocol document described above contains outdated information about how waters will be assessed, and the assessment information should be ignored. The protocol for calculating the Trophic-Weighted Residue Values themselves is still accurate.
2. Delisting –
 - a. All Fish/Shellfish Tissue Contaminants Except Mercury:
 1. Waters are eligible for delisting if there are no consumption restrictions and fish/shellfish can be consumed in unlimited amounts.
 - b. Fish/Shellfish Tissue – Mercury:
 1. Waters are eligible for delisting if the calculated Trophic-Weighted Residue Values for mercury in fish tissue is less than 0.25 mg/kg wet weight total. Waters where the calculated Trophic-Weighted Residue Value for mercury is between 0.25 mg/kg and 0.30 mg/kg wet weight total are put in Category 3. The 2001 protocol document described above contains outdated information about how waters will be assessed, and the assessment information should be ignored. The protocol for calculating the Trophic-Weighted Residue Values themselves is still accurate.

H. Biotic Data (Fish Bioassessments):

1. Listing – Fish Bioassessments are based on Fish Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) data. Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting use designation if:

- a. The IBI ranking is “Poor” or “Very Poor”;
2. Delisting –
- a. Waters are eligible for delisting if the waterbody has a Fish IBI rank of “Excellent”, “Good”, or “Fair”.

I. Biotic Data (Macroinvertebrate Bioassessments):

1. Listing – Benthic Macroinvertebrate Bioassessments based on a multi-metric index.
- a. Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting use designation if the narrative rankings are “Poor” or “Very Poor”.
 - b. If the narrative ranking is “Fair”, then the waterbody is placed in Category 3.
2. Delisting –
- a. Waterbodies are eligible for delisting if the waterbody scores a narrative ranking of “Very Good” or “Good”. If a waterbody scores “Fair”, it is placed in Category 3.

J. Data from Lakes with Site-Specific Nutrient Criteria:

Site-specific numeric criteria have been established for 8 major lakes in Georgia including 1) West Point Lake, 2) Lake Walter F. George, 3) Lake Jackson, 4) Lake Allatoona, 5) Lake Sidney Lanier 6) Carters Lake, 7) Lake Oconee and 8) Lake Sinclair. The criteria for these lakes can be found at 391-3-6-.03(17). These lakes are monitored annually and assessed for the parameters as described below:

1. Listing –
- a. Chlorophyll *a* (lake stations): The last five calendar years of chlorophyll *a* data collected at each site-specific lake criteria station are assessed. If data are collected by multiple organizations (e.g. EPD and a third party with an approved SQAP), the data from all organizations are averaged together. Preferred minimum data set: one sample a month for each month of the growing season (April – October) for five years.
1. If during the five-year assessment period, the growing season average exceeds the site-specific growing season criteria 2 (or more) out of the last 5 years, the lake area representative for that station is assessed as not supporting its designated uses. If the

average exceeds the site-specific growing season criteria for 1 out of the last 5 years, the waterbody is placed in Category 3.

- b. Total Nitrogen (lake stations): The last five calendar years of total nitrogen concentrations collected at each site-specific lake criteria station are assessed. Preferred minimum data set: one sample a month for each month of the growing season (April – October).
 - 1. For Lakes other than Lake Allatoona: If greater than 10% of the total nitrogen values exceed the site-specific criteria, the lake area representative for that station is assessed as not supporting its designated uses.
 - 2. For Lake Allatoona: A growing season average for each of the last five years is calculated for each site-specific lake criteria station. If any of the five growing season averages exceed the criterion, then the lake area is represented by that station is assessed as not supporting its designated uses.
 - 3. Lake Oconee and Sinclair do not have Total Nitrogen criteria at this time.
- c. Major Lake Tributary Annual Total Phosphorous Loading Criteria: Annual total phosphorous loadings for each major lake tributary standard station are calculated for each of the last five calendar years. Preferred minimum data set: one sample a month for each month of the growing season (April – October) for the last five years.
 - 1. If the average of the annual total phosphorous loadings exceeds the site-specific criteria, the site is assessed as not supporting designated uses. Note: Lake Oconee and Sinclair do not have Phosphorus Loading Criteria for their major tributaries.
- d. Major Lake Annual Total Phosphorous Loading Criteria: The annual total phosphorus loading for each lake is calculated for each of the last five calendar years. Preferred minimum data set: one sample a month for each month of the growing season (April – October) for the last five years.
 - 1. If the average of the annual total phosphorous loadings exceeds the site-specific criteria, the site is assessed as not supporting its designated uses. Note: Lake Oconee and Sinclair do not have Phosphorus Loading Criteria.

2. Delisting –

- a. Chlorophyll a (lake stations): The last five calendar years of chlorophyll a data collected at each site-specific lake standard station are assessed. If data are collected by multiple organizations (e.g. EPD and a third party with an approved SQAP), the data from all organizations are averaged together.
 - 1. If during the five-year assessment period, there are no chlorophyll a growing season averages exceeding the site-specific growing season criteria, the lake area representative for that station is eligible for delisting. If the average exceeds the site-specific growing season criteria for 1 out of 5 years, the waterbody is placed in Category 3.
- b. Total Nitrogen (lake stations): The last five calendar years of total nitrogen concentrations collected at each site-specific lake standard station are assessed.
 - 1. For Lakes other than Lake Allatoona: If 10% or less of the total nitrogen values exceed the site-specific criteria, the lake area representative for that station is eligible for delisting.
 - 2. For Lake Allatoona: A growing season average for each of the last five years is calculated for each site-specific lake criteria station. If none of the five growing season averages exceed the criterion, then the lake area that is represented by that station is eligible for delisting.
 - 3. Lake Oconee and Sinclair do not have Total Nitrogen criteria at this time.
- c. Major Lake Tributary Annual Total Phosphorous Loading Criteria: Annual total phosphorous loadings for each major lake tributary standard station are calculated for each of the last five calendar years.
 - 1. If the average of the annual total phosphorous loadings does not exceed the site-specific criteria, then the site was eligible for delisting. Note: Lake Oconee and Sinclair do not have Phosphorus Loading Criteria for their major tributaries.
- d. Major Lake Annual Total Phosphorous Loading Criteria: The annual total phosphorus loading for each lake is calculated for each of the last five calendar years.

1. If the average of the annual total phosphorous loadings does not exceed the site-specific criteria, then the site is eligible for delisting. Note: Lake Oconee and Sinclair do not have Phosphorus Loading Criteria.

K. Objectionable Algae (Nutrients):

1. Listing –
 - a. A waterbody is listed for objectionable algae based upon visual observation of excessive algae, duckweed, or other aquatic plant life by field staff along with other factors including high concentrations of nutrients in the waterbody compared with other waters in the same river basin, and diurnal DO and pH swings indicative of high algae or plant activity (higher DO and pH later in the day and lower DO in the early morning).
2. Delisting –
 - a. A waterbody is considered for delisting for objectionable algae if visual observation by field staff reveals algae, duckweed, or other aquatic plant life is no longer excessive compared to other streams in the area, and the DO, pH, and nutrient data are at levels that no longer indicate a problem with excessive algae/plant life.

L. Ammonia Toxicity:

EPD implemented U.S. EPA’s 2013 Ammonia Criteria using our narrative criteria “All waters shall be free from toxic, corrosive, acidic, and caustic substances discharged from municipalities, industries, or other sources, such as nonpoint sources, in amounts, concentrations, or combinations which are harmful to humans, animals, or aquatic life”, along with our [2017 NPDES Permitting Strategy for Addressing Ammonia Toxicity](#). As part of this permitting strategy, EPD has been collecting ammonia data upstream and downstream of NPDES facilities to determine if discharges are causing waters to exceed the U.S. EPA’s chronic ammonia criteria. For marine waters, narrative criteria utilize U.S. EPA’s 1989 *Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Ammonia (Saltwater)*. Preferred minimum data set: 12 samples in a 12-month period with 1 or 2 samples collected per month.

1. Listing – Ammonia concentration are compared against the criteria in the *U.S. EPA Aquatic Life Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Ammonia – Freshwater 2013* or the *U.S. EPA Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Ammonia (Saltwater) (1989)*. The criteria are expressed as formulas and the allowed concentrations are dependent upon water temperature and pH. Salinity is also used as a variable when calculating criteria for

marine waters (waters with a salinity of 0.5 parts per thousand and greater). When ammonia data is collected, temperature, pH and salinity data are also collected. Each ammonia concentration is compared against the ammonia toxicity criteria calculated using the temperature, pH and salinity data taken at the same time the ammonia sample was taken. For deep waters (like lakes and estuaries) where depth profiles are taken, the average of temperature, salinity, and pH (log mean) within the photic zone are used in the calculation. Waterbodies are determined **not** to be supporting their use designation if any of the following occurs:

- a. Ammonia concentrations exceed the chronic criteria more than once a year.
 - b. Ammonia concentrations exceed (2.5 x the chronic criteria) more than once in a 3-year period.
 - c. Ammonia concentrations exceed the acute criteria more than once in a 3-year period.
2. Delisting – A waterbody is eligible for delisting when the following conditions occur:
- a. Ammonia concentrations exceed the chronic criteria once a year or less.
 - b. Ammonia concentrations exceed (2.5 x the chronic criteria) no more than once in a 3-year period.
 - c. Ammonia concentrations exceed the acute criteria no more than once in a 3-year period.

IX. Priorities for Action

Section 303(d)(1)(A) of the Clean Water Act and 40 CFR 130.7(b)(4) requires each State to “establish a priority ranking” for the segments it identifies on the 303(d) List (i.e. those waters in Category 5). In addition, States must submit a list of waters targeted for TMDL development in the next two years. The priority ranking is to take into account the severity of the pollution and the designated uses of such segments. States are to establish TMDLs in accordance with the priority ranking. States are given considerable flexibility in establishing their ranking system.

EPD has chosen to implement the priority ranking by indicating the year by which the TMDL for each segment on the 303(d) List will be drafted. TMDLs may be drafted before the year indicated in the report. Georgia typically uses a basin rotation approach when it comes to drafting TMDLs. Georgia’s 14 river basins have been grouped into one of five river basin groupings. Each year Georgia writes TMDLs for impairments

in one of the river basin groupings. That means that in most cases TMDLs are scheduled to be drafted within five years of initially being assessed as impaired. There are some cases where EPD may choose to draft a TMDL outside of the basin rotation schedule. Factors influencing this decision could include the severity of the pollution and whether development of the TMDL may require additional data collection or complex analysis. For instance, TMDLs for chlorophyll *a* often require complex models to be developed and this can take considerable time and resources. Therefore, these TMDLs are often drafted outside of the basin rotation schedule. In addition, waters included on the State's Priority List of Waters (described below in the Long-Term Vision) can also be developed outside of the normal basin rotation schedule. All dates provided as part of the priority ranking are within the 13-year timeframe allowed for TMDL development as provided in the US EPA 1997 Interpretative Guidance for the TMDL Program. This guidance says states should develop schedules for establishing TMDLs expeditiously, generally within 8-13 years of being listed. If a water is in Category 5R, the priority ranking is provided as a narrative "Low" instead of providing the year by which the TMDL will be drafted. This is because TMDL development has been postponed while other restoration actions are being pursued. EPD also submits a list of the waters and pollutants that are targeted for TMDL development in the next two years to U.S. EPA as part of the Integrated Report submittal in accordance with 40 CFR 130.7(b)(4).

X. Long-Term Vision

In 2013 US EPA implemented the first Long-Term Vision for Assessment, Restoration, and Protection of waters. As part of this first Vision process, EPD developed a Priority Framework that described how we would prioritize waters on the 303(d) list for development of TMDLs or TMDL alternatives. EPD also developed a list of Priority Waters for which we planned to develop TMDLs or TMDL alternatives by 2022. EPD successfully completed all TMDLs or TMDL alternatives on our Priority list of waters by the 2022 deadline.

In 2022, US EPA released guidance for a new Long-Term Vision period (2022-2032). Under this new Vision Document, Georgia developed a new [Priority Framework](#) that will guide the decision process on what TMDLs, Advanced Restoration Plans or Protection Plans will be prioritized for completion by 2032. Every two years, EPD will provide U.S. EPA with a list of Priority waters for which we plan to draft or to begin the development process for TMDLs or other plans in the next two-year period. The first set of Priority Waters under the New Vision was provided to U.S. EPA in the fall of 2024. A table of these Priority Waters is shown below. EPD committed to complete the TMDLs for Dissolved Oxygen (DO), Ammonia Toxicity, and *E. coli* by September 30, 2026. EPD committed to beginning the TMDL process for Chlorophyll *a*, enterococci and Total Phosphorus (TP) by September 30, 2026. Information about Georgia's Priority Framework can be found on the [Water Quality in Georgia webpage](#).

| AU ID | Name | Location | Cause | Basin |
|-----------------|---|---|------------------|---------------|
| GAR031102030410 | Tributary to Cherry Creek | Oak Street Subdivision WPCP to unnamed tributary 0.4 miles downstream Lake Laurie Drive | Ammonia Toxicity | Suwannee |
| GAR031102040504 | Tributary to Franks Creek | Pond 780 feet upstream of Union Road to Franks Creek | Ammonia Toxicity | Suwannee |
| GAR031300031304 | Walter F. George Lake | Mid-Lake (U.S. Hwy 82) to Dam Forebay | Chlorophyll a | Chattahoochee |
| GAR031300031601 | Walter F. George Lake | Dam Pool | Chlorophyll a | Chattahoochee |
| GAR030701030905 | Jackson Lake | Tusahaw Creek, South River, Yellow River, and Alcovy River Arms | Chlorophyll a | Ocmulgee |
| GAR031102040405 | Big Branch | Headwaters to Sumner Lake | DO | Suwannee |
| GAR031102040412 | Reedy Creek | Norman Park WPCP to tributary 0.7 miles downstream DH Alderman Rd | DO | Suwannee |
| GAR031102030410 | Tributary to Cherry Creek | Oak Street Subdivision WPCP to unnamed tributary 0.4 miles downstream Lake Laurie Drive | DO | Suwannee |
| GAR031102040504 | Tributary to Franks Creek | Pond 780 feet upstream of Union Road to Franks Creek | DO | Suwannee |
| GAR031102020105 | Tributary to Reynolds Creek | Amaco Road to Reynolds Creek | DO | Suwannee |
| GAR031300010920 | Chattahoochee River | Buford Dam to James Creek | E coli | Chattahoochee |
| GAR030601090313 | Tybee Island - Polk Street Beach | End of Beach to Jetty | Enterococci | Savannah |
| GAR030601090316 | Tybee Island - Strand Beach at Pier | 11th Street to 18th Street | Enterococci | Savannah |
| GAR030702030220 | Saint Simons Island - Middle Beach (aka East Beach Old Coast Guard Station) | Tenth Street to Driftwood Drive | Enterococci | Satilla |
| GAR030702030221 | Saint Simons Island - Massengale Park Beach | Driftwood Drive to Cedar Street | Enterococci | Satilla |
| GAR030702030222 | Saint Simons Island - 5th Street Crossover Beach | Cedar Street to 9th Street (Village Area) | Enterococci | Satilla |
| GAR030702030223 | Saint Simons Island - South Beach at Lighthouse | 9th Street to Pier (Village Area) | Enterococci | Satilla |
| GAR030702030229 | Saint Simons Island - North Beach at Goulds Inlet | St. Simons Island Fifteenth Street to Tenth Street (East Beach Area) | Enterococci | Satilla |

| AU ID | Name | Location | Cause | Basin |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|--|--------------|---------------|
| GAR030702030234 | Jekyll Island - Driftwood Beach | Beach Kilometer Marker 1 to Tallu Fish Lane | Enterococci | Satilla |
| GAR031300020803 | West Point Lake | Troup and Heard Counties | TP | Chattahoochee |