



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
AGENCY  
REGION 10

1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 155  
Seattle, WA 98101-3123

OFFICE OF  
WATER AND  
WATERSHEDS

13 September 2018

Becca Conklin  
Washington Department of Ecology  
Surface Water Quality Standards  
P.O. Box 47600  
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

RE: The EPA's Comments on the Proposed Revisions to Washington's Fresh and Marine Water Quality Standards for the Protection of Water Contact Recreational Uses

Dear Ms. Conklin:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Washington State Department of Ecology's draft Recreational Criteria revisions at WAC 173-201A filed on July 17, 2018.<sup>1</sup> The EPA appreciates Ecology's efforts to update the state's water quality standards consistent with the EPA's 2012 national Recreational Water Quality Criteria recommendations. The proposed revisions are an important component in providing public health protection where fresh and marine surface waters are used for recreation.

The EPA has reviewed Ecology's proposed rule revisions and offers the following comments for your consideration:

The proposed language in Table 200(2)(b) Primary Contact Recreation Bacteria Criteria in Fresh Water states,

*"E. coli organism levels within an averaging period must not exceed a geometric mean value of 100 CFU or MPN per 100 mL, with not more than 10 percent of all samples (or any single sample when less than ten sample points exist) obtained within the averaging period exceeding 320 CFU or MPN per 100 mL."*

And

The proposed language in Table 210(3)(b) Primary Contact Recreation Bacteria Criteria in Marine Water states,

*"Enterococci organism levels within an averaging period must not exceed a geometric mean value of 30 CFU or MPN per 100 mL, with not more than 10 percent of all samples (or any single sample when less than ten sample values exist) obtained within the averaging period exceeding 110 CFU or MPN per 100 mL."*

The EPA interprets the proposed language in both rule provisions above to mean that the 10 percent exceedance frequency is calculated over the same averaging period as the geometric mean. The EPA

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Laws-rules-rulemaking/Rulemaking/WAC-173-201A-Aug17#June14>

suggests clarifying the rule language that both the geometric mean and 10 percent exceedance are measured over the same averaging period.

In addition, the proposed language at 173-201A-200(2)(b)(i) and 173-201A-210(3)(b)(i) states,

*"A minimum of three samples is required to calculate a geometric mean for comparison to the geometric mean criteria. Sample collection dates shall be well distributed throughout the averaging period so as not to mask noncompliance periods."*

The EPA recommends that Ecology not include data sufficiency clauses or statements which address the number of samples in its criteria statement. Instead, the EPA recommends that Ecology include these statements regarding sampling in the state's water quality assessment policy 1-11<sup>2</sup> for assessing compliance with the revised recreational criteria. If such language is retained in Ecology's water quality standards, the EPA does not plan to take action on this language as it would not be considered a new or revised water quality standard under Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act.

The EPA appreciates Ecology's commitment to update Washington's water quality standards. We look forward to continuing to engage with you throughout this process. If you have any questions, please contact me at (206) 553-0268 or Guzzo.Lindsay@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Lindsay Guzzo  
Water Quality Standards Coordinator  
Office of Water & Watersheds

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-quality/Water-improvement/Assessment-of-state-waters-303d/Assessment-policy-1-11>