



DEQ Policy Statement PS24-01

Assessing Salmonid Spawning in Idaho Waterbodies

Purpose

This statement describes the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ's) policy for the assessment of waterbodies in Idaho for the presence of salmonids for the purpose of applying salmonid spawning protections. This complies with the following statute and procedures:

1. Surface Water Quality Criteria for Aquatic Life Use Designations, Salmonid spawning (IDAPA 58.01.02.250.02.f)
2. *Water Body Assessment Guidance, Third Edition* (October 2016), Idaho DEQ (2013AKL7)

Background

DEQ identified a need to establish when and where spawning occurs for salmonid fishes throughout Idaho. The *Geography and Timing of Salmonid Spawning in Idaho* report provides background information on the development of the geography and timing of salmonids in Idaho. It expanded on the efforts of prior work assembled and the Watershed Body Assessment Guidance. A series of tables that described general spawning locations along with incubation and emergence periods were developed through literature reviews. In addition, new information sources were compiled to augment that information and produce a series of Geographic Information System (GIS) maps to describe the location of potential spawning areas in Idaho. A statewide map including associated data tables compatible with ESRI ArcGIS were developed to display the information and facilitate application of water quality standards for salmonid spawning.

This policy statement clarifies the guidelines for identifying and protecting salmonid spawning areas in critical habitats.

Statement of Policy

Staff must consult the latest *Geography and Timing of Salmonid Spawning in Idaho* report and associated GIS layer when considering the appropriate application of salmonid spawning use to a waterbody. Appropriate application of the salmonid spawning use is critical to identifying applicable water quality standards when developing:

- Waterbody assessments
- TMDLs
- Water Quality Certifications
- IPDES permitting

The timeframes and species present in the report and GIS layer take precedence over other data sources such as anecdotal information, or current Idaho Fish and Game data. The report and GIS layer consider historical information and potential spawning locations that could, or historically, have supported salmonid spawning since 1975, even if not currently utilized by salmonids. If properly protected or restored, these areas could support salmonid spawning.

DEQ will ensure the policy is adhered to by incorporating the *Geography and Timing of Salmonid Spawning in Idaho* and the associated GIS layer during the yearly Integrated Report training. DEQ will also add this policy to our list of guidance and policy documents that are given to new employees. The TMDL State Office coordinator will ensure that new hires have access and understand how to utilize the GIS layer when assessing data and writing reports for the TMDLs. When drafting or updating discharge permits, DEQ will incorporate the GIS layer and report into the Permit Issuance Plan (PIP) in order to identify drainages where salmonid spawning criterion should apply.

Responsibility

DEQ's Senior Water Quality Standards Scientist is responsible for maintaining this policy.

Implementation

This policy is effective immediately and will remain in effect unless amended, replaced, or rescinded prior to expiration.

Dated this 27th day of September, 2024.



Jess Byrne
Director, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality