# Antidegradation Tier Determination Worksheet

This worksheet assists applicants in identifying the applicable antidegradation protection level for recreation and aquatic life beneficial uses under IDAPA 58.01.02.051-052. Tier determinations are based on DEQ's Integrated Report categories, beneficial use status, and other available information consistent with *Idaho's Antidegradation Implementation Procedures*. Tier determinations are use-specific. Recreation and aquatic life uses may receive different tiers of protection.

*Note: Applicants may assume Tier II protection applies instead of completing this tier determination worksheet.*

## Antidegradation Protections

- **Tier I Protection** is the minimum level of antidegradation protection applied to all water bodies. Existing uses and the level of water quality necessary to protect those uses shall be maintained and protected.
- **Tier II Protection** applies where water quality is better than levels necessary to support beneficial uses. Lowering of water quality may be allowed only where necessary to accommodate important economic or social development in the area where the waters are located.
- **Tier III Protection** applies to Outstanding Resource Waters where water quality shall be maintained and protected from the impacts of point and nonpoint source activities. Idaho has not yet designated any Tier III waters.

## Integrated Report Category Summary

The Integrated Report describes whether Idaho's surface waters support their beneficial uses. Assessment units (AUs) are placed into one or more reporting categories based on available water quality information, beneficial use support, and any impairments affecting those uses (Table 1).

### Table 1. Integrated Report category summaries.

| Category | Summary |
|---|---|
| 1 | Waters within designated wilderness areas and fully supporting beneficial uses |
| 2 | Waters fully supporting assessed beneficial uses |
| 3 | Insufficient information to determine beneficial use support |
| 4 | Impaired for one or more beneficial uses, but a TMDL is not required |
| 5 | Impaired for one or more beneficial uses and requires a TMDL (303(d) list) |

## Step 1—Initial Integrated Report Review

Use DEQ's Integrated Report Mapping Tool and supporting available data to complete this worksheet. Read the yellow instruction box after answering each question. The instruction box indicates the applicable tier for that use, whether to proceed to the next question, and/or whether to skip to another section.

| Project Information | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Preparer Name / Company:** | | **Review Date:** | |
| **Project Name / Activity:** | | **Permit No. (if applicable):** | |
| **Receiving Water Body Name:** | | **Water Body / AU Type:** | |
| **Assessment Unit (AU) ID:** | | | |

| # | Question | Answer | Basis / Data Source / Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **S-1** | Is the AU listed in Category 1 or 2 of Idaho's Integrated Report? | | |
| ***Read This Before Moving On:***<br>► *Yes → Tier II applies to both recreation and aquatic life uses. Proceed to Step 5 (Final Tier Summary).*<br>► *No → Proceed to question S-2.* | | | |
| **S-2** | Is the AU listed in Category 3 of Idaho's Integrated Report? | | |
| ***Read This Before Moving On:***<br>► *Yes → AU is listed in Category 3 and requires case-by-case determination for both recreation and aquatic life uses. Contact the appropriate regional office (Table 2) for assistance and record outcome with justification in Step 4 (Supplemental Notes and Case-by-Case Justification).*<br>► *No → AU is listed in Category 4 or 5. Proceed to Step 2 (Recreation Use) and Step 3 (Aquatic Life Use).* | | | |

## Step 2—Recreation Use Tier Determination

| # | Question | Answer | Basis / Data Source / Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Recreation Use** | | | |
| **R-1** | Is the recreation use assessed for this AU? | | |
| ***Read This Before Moving On:***<br>► *Yes → Proceed to question R-2.* | | | |

► *No → Recreation use requires a case-by-case determination[a]. Record in Recreation Use Outcome and provide justification in Step 4 (Supplemental Notes and Case-by-Case Justification). Proceed to Step 3.*

***Note:*** *A beneficial use is assigned "Fully Supporting" or "Not Supporting" only when DEQ has reviewed actual data and information about it. If a beneficial use is not assessed, it will not be assigned a support status. The use may appear in a list of unassessed beneficial uses when accessing the status report via the interactive mapper. If the use is not assigned a support status, it is unassessed.*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **R-2** | Is the recreation use fully supported? | | |

***Read This Before Moving On:***
► *Yes → Tier II for recreation use. Record outcome below in Recreation Use Outcome and proceed to Step 3.*
► *No → Proceed to question R-3.[a]*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **R-3** | Does available water quality data show compliance with water quality criteria listed in IDAPA 58.01.02 Sections 200, 210, 251, and 275 (where applicable)? | | |

***Read This Before Moving On:***
► *Yes → Tier II for recreation use. Identify the data source(s) and provide a summary of the basis for determining compliance with recreation criteria in Step 4. Record the outcome below and proceed to Step 3.*
► *No → Tier I for recreation use. Record the outcome below and proceed to Step 3.*

**Recreation Use Outcome:** ☐ Tier I ☐ Tier II ☐ Case-by-Case Determination[a]

a. *DEQ will need data to make an informed decision on support of the use that is unassessed. Contact the appropriate regional office (Table 2) for assistance with Step 3.*

## Step 3—Aquatic Life Use Tier Determination

| # | Question | Answer | Basis / Data Source / Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Aquatic Life Use** | | | |
| **A-1** | Is the aquatic life use assessed for this AU? | | |

***Read This Before Moving On:***
► *Yes → Proceed to question A-2.*
► *No → Aquatic life use requires a case-by-case determination[b]. Record in Aquatic Life Use Outcome and provide justification in Step 4 (Supplemental Notes and Case-by-Case Justification).*

*Note: A beneficial use is labeled "Fully Supporting" or "Not Supporting" only when DEQ has reviewed actual data and information about it. When a use has not been assessed yet, it will not receive either label. The use may appear in a list of unassessed beneficial uses when accessing the status report via the interactive mapper. If the use is not assigned a support status, it is unassessed.*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A-2** | Is the aquatic life use fully supported? | | |

***Read This Before Moving On:***
► *Yes → Tier II for aquatic life use. Record outcome below in Aquatic Life Use Outcome and proceed to Step 5.*
► *No → Proceed to question A-3.*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A-3** | Is the AU impaired for pollutants other than temperature, pH, or dissolved oxygen? | | |

***Read This Before Moving On:***
► *Yes → Tier I for aquatic life use. Record outcome below in Aquatic Life Use Outcome and proceed to Step 5.*
► *No → Proceed to question A-4.*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A-4** | Are biological or habitat data available?[b] | | |

***Read This Before Moving On:***
► *Yes → Proceed to question A-5.*
► *No → Tier I for aquatic life use. Record in Aquatic Use Outcome below and proceed to Step 5.*[c]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A-5** | Does available biological or habitat data indicate a healthy community or support of the aquatic life use?[d] | | |

***Read This Before Moving On:***
► *Yes → Tier II for aquatic life. Record in Aquatic Use Outcome below and proceed to Step 5.*
► *No → Tier I for aquatic life. Record in Aquatic Use Outcome below and proceed to Step 5.*

**Aquatic Life Use Outcome:** ☐ Tier I ☐ Tier II ☐ Case-by-Case Determination[a]

*b. Biological or habitat data may include DEQ Beneficial Use Reconnaissance Program (BURP) data, BURP-compatible data, or other scientifically defensible external data evaluated by DEQ (DEQ 2016).*

*c. DEQ will attempt to obtain biological or habitat data to make an informed decision on the support of aquatic life use.*

*d. An average rating score of 2.0 or greater indicates a healthy and balanced aquatic community and the AU will be assigned Tier II antidegradation protection. An average rating score below 2.0 indicates the AU is not considered high quality, and Tier I antidegradation protection will apply.*

## Step 4—Supplemental Notes and Case-by-Case Justification

Applicants must coordinate with the appropriate DEQ regional office (Table 2) when a case-by-case determination or additional data evaluation is necessary. Attach any correspondence from the regional office documenting the tier determination.

Applicants may assume Tier II protection in situations requiring a case-by-case determination. If Tier II is assumed, no additional justification is required.

Provide any applicable notes, case-by-case justification, supporting data and documentation, and references to communications with DEQ.

If not already completed, return to Step 3 to complete the Aquatic Life Use Determination.

***Read This Before Moving On:***
► *Note: After completing Step 4, proceed to Step 5 and document the final case-by-case tier determination.*

## Step 5—Final Tier Determination Summary

| Use Category | Tier Determination |
|---|---|
| Recreation Use | ☐ Tier I ☐ Tier II |
| Aquatic Life Use | ☐ Tier I ☐ Tier II |
| Tier I protections apply to all waters and all beneficial uses. If either the recreation use or aquatic life use qualifies for Tier II protection, then Tier II protections apply to that specific use, and any proposed degradation affecting that use must be evaluated in accordance with Idaho's Tier II antidegradation requirements.<br><br>For projects seeking coverage under the Idaho Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (IPDES) Construction General Permit, the more stringent Tier II permit requirements apply whenever either the recreation use or aquatic life use receives Tier II protection, regardless of whether the other use remains classified as Tier I. | |

***Example:***
*Recreation Use = Tier II*
*Aquatic Life Use = Tier I*

*In this example, Tier I protections apply to all waters and all beneficial uses. The recreation use qualifies for Tier II protection; therefore, any degradation associated with recreation use criteria must be evaluated under Idaho's Tier II antidegradation requirements, while aquatic life remains subject to Tier I protection.*

## Preparer Certification

| | |
|---|---|
| **Preparer Signature** | |
| **Printed Name / Title** | |
| **Date** | |

## Resources

- DEQ Integrated Report Mapping Tool
- DEQ Monitoring and Assessment
- DEQ Water Body Assessment Guidance
- IDAPA 58.01.02 – Water Quality Standards
- Final Idaho Antidegradation Implementation Procedures
- Assessment, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Tracking and Implementation System (EPA ATTAINS Database)

## Table 2. DEQ regional office contact information.

| Office Location | Phone Number |
|---|---|
| Boise | 208-373-0550 |
| Coeur d'Alene | 208-769-1422 |
| Idaho Falls | 208-528-2650 |
| Lewiston | 208-799-4370 |
| Pocatello | 208-236-6160 |
| Twin Falls | 208-736-2190 |
| State Office | 208-373-0502 |

*Note: When contacting DEQ for assistance, ask for surface water staff.*