2026 Triennial Review of Idaho Water Quality Standards



State of Idaho

Department of Environmental Quality

September 2026

Prepared by
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1 Background

The goal of the 2026 triennial review was to meet Clean Water Act (CWA) requirements by engaging stakeholders and identifying priorities for water quality standards rulemaking and subprogram development for the next 3+ years.

The CWA § 303 requires states to modify and improve their water quality standards at least once every 3 years. Under this triennial review process, states must review, modify, and adopt applicable water quality standards, taking into consideration public concerns, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidance, and new scientific and technical information.

The CWA requires states to adopt EPA's recommended criteria or develop their own and routinely review and update the water quality standards to ensure consistency with the act's requirements. Specifically, CWA § 303(c)(1) states the "…State shall from time to time (but at least once each three year period…) hold public hearings for the purpose of reviewing applicable water quality standards and, as appropriate, modifying and adopting standards." This public review period is referred to as the triennial review.

2 Public Involvement

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) provided opportunities for public participation by publishing three water quality standards issue papers for public review and hosting two in-person meetings in Lewiston and Idaho Falls, and one hybrid meeting in Boise. The public meetings communicated triennial review requirements, proposed issues for prioritization, and solicited feedback from stakeholders. The information presented at the meetings is available on the *Water Quality Standards web page* under the Triennial Review drop-down.

The list of attendees is provided in Appendix A.

2.1.1 Issues Identified by DEQ

DEQ identified, through an internal statewide survey and previous triennial reviews, four water quality standards issues and developed white papers and workshop presentations discussing these issues. Issue papers are available on the *Water Quality Standards web page* under the Triennial Review drop-down.

A summary of each issue paper is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of water quality standards issue papers published by DEQ.

Subject	Summary of Issue Paper
1. EPA Acute Aquatic Life Screening Values for 6PPD-Q	EPA published a screening value for protection of aquatic life from toxic effects of the tire additive 6PPD and its ozonation product 6PPD-quinone. The contaminant is highly toxic to Coho Salmon, with research on its effect on other species ongoing. DEQ will take no action at this time regarding the screening values but will monitor the emerging research on the compound and the risk it may pose to Idaho's resident species.
2. Adopting EPA § 304(a) Recommended Aquatic Life Criteria for Ammonia	DEQ is moving forward with adopting state-specific surface water quality ammonia criteria for aquatic life use designations (IDAPA 58.01.02.250), using the species-deletion criteria recalculation method. The details of the rulemaking process and results are found on DEQ's rulemaking page under *Docket 58-0102-2602* .
3. Considering § 304(a) Aluminum Aquatic Life Criteria	§ 304(a) Aluminum Aquatic Life Criteria were updated in 2018 from the previous 1988 criteria. Idaho has yet to adopt aluminum criteria, and DEQ is proposing to conduct an investigative study of background levels of aluminum concentrations in waters across the state to evaluate the regulatory impact of adopting an aluminum criteria.
4. Considering final EPA recommended § 304(a) criteria for Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid (PFOS)	EPA published the final § 304(a) recommended aquatic life criteria for PFOA and PFOS in September 2024. The differences between the draft and final criteria were evaluated, and the final criteria are more restrictive due to the addition of more sensitive species in the criteria calculation. Due to the lack of information on PFOA and PFOS in Idaho surface waters, budget limitations, and competing priorities, Idaho will not prioritize adopting this criteria at this time.

Other issues identified during the triennial review process that were not captured in an issue paper include investigation of recycled wastewater in irrigation systems and merging contaminants such as pharmaceutical products.

2.1.2 Summary of Workshop Comments Received

DEQ solicited written comments on materials presented at each of the public meetings, the published issue papers, and other water quality standards concerns. The written comment period deadline was August 31, 2026. DEQ received two comment letters. The commentors encouraged DEQ to prioritize PFOA and PFAS surface and wastewater testing and to continue investigating other emerging contaminants.

The comment letters are available at *2026 Triennial Review Documents* and summarized in Appendix B.

3 Water Quality Standards Priorities

DEQ evaluates multiple factors when assigning priorities to potential water quality standards projects during the triennial review. In addition to public comments, these other considerations are weighted in deciding the priority for Triennial Review topics. Figure 1 covers various factors that DEQ considers in prioritizing programmatic goals.

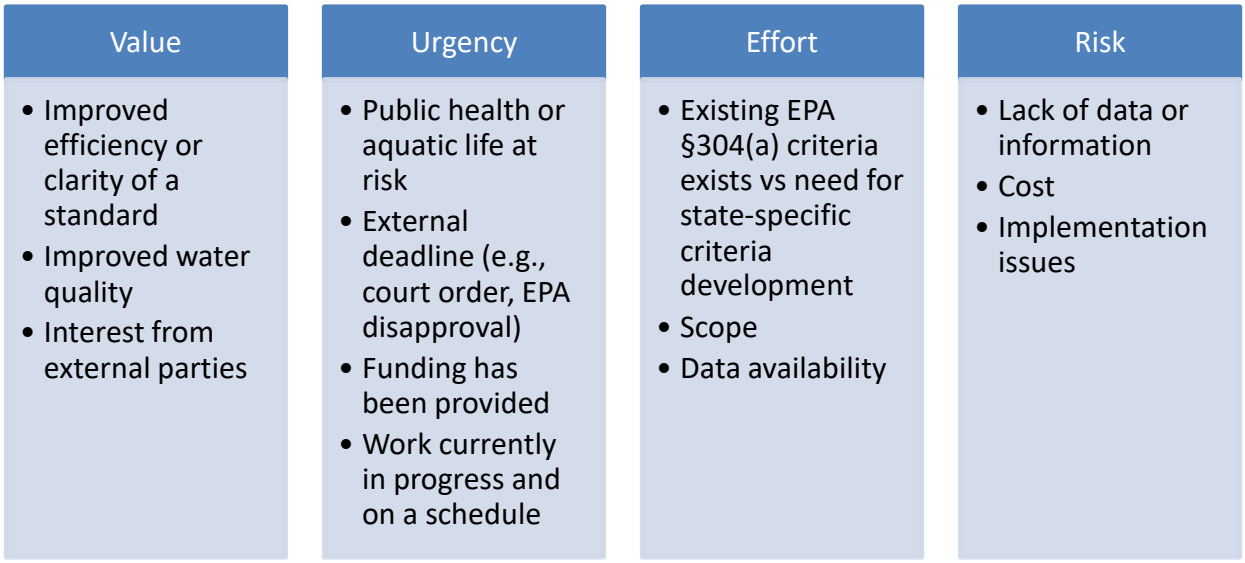


Figure 1. Factors DEQ considers when prioritizing Trienniel Review goals.

3.1 High Priority

DEQ intends to address the following high-priority items in 2027:

- Ammonia criteria development. Project is underway. Ammonia rulemaking was initiated in August 2026.

3.2 Medium Priority

DEQ intends to address the following medium-priority items in 2028:

- Investigate background levels of aluminum in Idaho and evaluate the regulatory impact of adopting § 304(a) EPA-recommended aluminum aquatic life criteria.

3.3 Low Priority

The following issues are considered low priority and will not be addressed until 2029 or beyond:

- Adopting final EPA recommended § 304(a) criteria for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS)
- Implementing EPA threshold values for 6-ppd-q.

Appendix A. Public Meetings Attendee List

Name	Affiliation
Alex LaBeau	IACI
Alyssa Gersdorf	Not Provided
Andrew Knight	Not Provided
Anna Mikulis	USTMA
Bill Maughan	Not Provided
Clayton Steele	IDEQ Board Member
Craig Borrenpohl	City of Post Falls
Danie Merriman	Idaho Power Company
Doug Durbin	Brown and Caldwell
Elias Kemp	Idaho Conservation League
Gary Bowling	Not Provided
Gina Mulhern	Not Provided
Jarrod Long	University of Idaho
Jennifer Cornell	IDEQ
Kate Harris	City of Boise
Ken Clark	Nez Perce Tribe
L. Noeker	Not Provided
Lance Sayers	Association of Idaho Cities
Laura Heinse	Washington Office of Drinking Water
Laura Swanberg	Santec
Lucas Spelsberg	Formation Environmental
Luke Kawano	IDRWA
Mark Crea	Not Provided
Matt Baker	Lewiston Orchards Irrigation District
Matt Cantwell	Veritas Advisors
Michael Short	IDEQ
Nancy Chagares	Not Provided
Nick Gerhardt	Not Provided
Niel Crescenti	IDEQ
Robert Schwenne	Not Provided
Ryan Knutzen	City of Boise
Ryan Morgan	Not Provided
Shelley Roberts	IDRWA
Sophia Fleming	Not Provided
Tambra Phares	IDEQ
Tom Dupuis	HDR
Travis Kissire	City of Meridian
Weston Burcar	Formation Environmental
Will Tiedemann	Idaho Conservation League

Appendix B. Summary of Comments Received

2023 Triennial Review Response to Comments Received:

Commenter 1 – Hank Allen

Commenter 2 – Sophia Flemming

Comment	Rule Section / Subject Matter	Commenter	Comment Summary	Response
1	PFOA & PFOS	1, 2	Commentors expressed their support for further surface water testing for PFOA and PFOS.	DEQ thanks the commentors for their input.
2	Wastewater	2	Commentor asks that DEQ look to monitoring for PFAS, PFOA/PFOS, pharmaceuticals, hormones, microplastics, aluminum, antibiotics, antimicrobial compounds, antibiotic resistance genes, disinfection byproducts, salts, and other emerging contaminants in Idaho surface waters and recycled wastewater systems.	DEQ thanks the commentor for their input, their concerns about emerging contaminants have been noted. Aluminum surveys will commence in the coming two years, while other emerging contaminants will be addressed when funding allows.