

# Information Sheet

## TMDL for the Rausch Creek Watershed

### ***What is being proposed?***

A TMDL plan to improve the quality of water in the Rausch Creek Watershed, tributary to Pine Creek in Schuylkill County.

### ***Who is proposing the plan? To whom? Why?***

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is proposing to submit the plan to the US Environmental Agency (EPA) for review and approval as required by the federal regulation.

In 1995, EPA was sued for not developing TMDLs when Pennsylvania did not do so. DEP has entered into an agreement with EPA to develop TMDLs for certain specified waters over the next several years. DEP developed this TMDL in compliance with the state/EPA agreement.

### ***What is a TMDL?***

A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) sets a ceiling on the pollutant loads that can enter a waterbody so that the waterbody will meet water quality standards. The Clean Water Act requires states to list all waters that do not meet their water quality standards even after pollution controls required by law are in place. For these waters, the state must calculate how much of a substance can be put in the water without violating the standard, and then distribute that quantity to all sources of the pollutant on that waterbody. A TMDL plan includes waste load allocations for point sources, load allocations for nonpoint sources and a margin of safety.

The Clean Water Act requires states to submit their TMDLs to EPA for approval. Also, if a state does not develop the TMDL, the Clean Water Act states that EPA must do so.

### ***What is a water quality standard?***

The Clean Water Act sets a national minimum goal that all waters be “fishable” and “swimable”. To support this goal, states must adopt water quality standards.

Water quality standards are state regulations, which have two components. The first component is a designated use, such as “warm water fishes” or recreation”. States must assign a use, or several uses to each of their waters. The second component relates to the instream conditions necessary to protect the use(s). These conditions or “criteria” are physical, chemical or biological characteristics such as temperature and the minimum concentration of dissolved oxygen and the maximum concentrations of toxic pollutants.

It is the combination of the “designated uses” and the “criteria” to support the use that make up a water quality standard. If any criteria are being exceeded, then the use is not being met, and the water is said to be violating water quality standards.

***What is the purpose of the plan?***

Tributaries of Rausch Creek suffer impairment due to acid mine drainage (AMD). Concentrations of metals are too high to support the designated uses of the waterbody.

The plan includes a calculation of the loading for each metal and acidity that can be safely put into the creek and meet the state water quality criteria. The metals associated with AMD are aluminum, iron and manganese. The proposed TMDL, when implemented, is expected to achieve the water quality standards for these metals.

***Why did we choose Rausch Creek?***

In 1996, the department listed Rausch Creek and its tributaries East Branch Rausch Creek and West Branch Rausch Creek under the Section 303(d) of the clean water act as not meeting or expecting to meet water quality standards for sediment, pH and metals. The listed segments and miles degraded are shown in the following table:

Stream Code	Stream Name	Miles Degraded
17266	Rausch Creek	1.7
17267	West Branch Rausch Creek	3.5
17268	East Branch Rausch Creek	1.9

***What pollutants does this TMDL address?***

The proposed plan provides calculations of stream’s total capacity to accept sediment, metals (aluminum, iron and manganese) and acidity and maintain levels below water quality criteria

***Where do the pollutants come from?***

The pollutants come primarily from abandoned mine workings. The Rausch Creek Watershed was mined heavily for coal from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues today. The effects of the preregulated mining are still present.

***How was the TMDL developed?***

DEP used Monte Carlo Simulation to determine the long-term average concentrations that each stream segment could accept and still meet water quality criteria 99% of the time. Monte Carlo simulation allows for the expansion of a data set based on its statistical makeup. Since there was no one critical flow condition where criteria were exceeded, we used the average of the flow to calculate the loads.

***How much Pollution is too much?***

The allowable amount of pollution in a stream varies depending on several conditions. TMDLs are set to meet water quality standards at the defined critical flow condition. If there is more than one critical flow condition, the TMDL must be constructed to meet water quality criteria at all flow conditions. This is the case for Rausch Creek. For this reason we are using the long term average concentration values that will meet water quality criteria 99% of the time as the basis for the TMDL.

The applicable water quality criteria are as follows:

Parameter	Criterion value (mg/l)	Duration	Total Recoverable/ Dissolved
Aluminum*	0.1 of the 96 hour LC 50 0.75	Maximum one hour	Total recoverable
Iron	1.50 0.3	1 day average maximum	Total recoverable dissolved
Manganese	1.00	maximum	Total recoverable
PH**	6 - 9	At all times	NA

- \*- This TMDL was developed using the value of 0.75 mg/l as the in-stream criterion for aluminum. This is the EPA national acute fish and aquatic life criterion for aluminum. Pennsylvania's current aluminum criterion is 0.1 mg/l of the 96-hour LC-50 and is contained in PA Title 25 Chapter 93. The EPA national criterion was used because the Department has recommended adopting the EPA criterion and is awaiting final promulgation of it.
- \*\* - The pH values shown will be used when applicable. In the case of freestone streams with little or no buffering capacity, the TMDL endpoint for pH will be the natural background water quality. These values are typically as low as 5.4 (Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission). This condition is met when the net alkalinity is maintained above zero.

***How will these limits be met?***

There is no a watershed rehabilitation plan available but the Rausch Creek Watershed TMDL Report contains a number recommendations. To date some of the recommendations have been implemented.

***How can I get more information on the TMDL?***

The TMDL can be accessed through the DEP Website (<http://www.dep.state.pa.us>) by typing "TMDL" in the direct link field, and clicking GO. The data and all supporting information used to develop the proposed TMDL are available from the Department. To request a copy of the proposed TMDL, contact Lee McDonnell, Dept. of Environmental Protection, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor RCSOB, P.O. Box 8555, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8555, 717-783-2938. Email will be received at [Mcdonnell.Lee@dep.state.pa.us](mailto:Mcdonnell.Lee@dep.state.pa.us). Persons with a disability may use the AT&T Relay Service by calling 1-800-654-5984 (TDD users) or 1-800-654-5988 (voice users) and request that the call be relayed. Directions to the Hegins Township Water Authority can also be obtained by contacting this address. Persons who plan to make a presentation at the public meeting should notify the Department no later than Friday January 5, 2001

***How can I comment on the proposal?***

Written and email comments will be accepted at the above addresses and must be received by February 13, 2001. Comments will not be accepted by facsimile or voice mail. The Department will consider all comments in developing the final TMDL, which will be submitted to EPA for approval.