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News Release

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DEQ Requests Public Input on the Draft *Water Quality in Oklahoma 2010 Report*

Under the federal Clean Water Act, Sections 303(d) and 305(b), states are required to assess the water quality of all bodies of water, such as lakes and streams, in the state. The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has released the draft *Water Quality in Oklahoma 2010 Report* (aka the Integrated Report) for Oklahoma's lakes and streams. Waterbodies are monitored to determine if they meet designated uses such as drinking, swimming, and fishing. Bodies of water that do not meet their designated uses are considered "impaired" under Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act. Studies are conducted by DEQ engineers and scientists to establish Total Maximum Daily Loads, or TMDLs, in these streams in order to help control polluting activities and clean up impaired waters.

This draft *Water Quality in Oklahoma 2010 Report* shows that out of the 4,183 total waterbodies in the DEQ database, 721 were determined to be impaired. This means that 25 waterbodies were added to the 303(d) list since the 2008 report, and 47 waterbodies were taken off the 2008 303(d) list. According to the draft report, the major pollutant for streams is bacteria (such as E. coli and other pathogens from feces) and for lakes is lack of oxygen, which can kill fish. The second most common pollutant for both streams and lakes is suspended sediment (turbidity) which can fill up streams and lakes and affect aquatic life.

Waterbodies in the draft report are placed into one of five categories:

- Category 1 - Attaining the water quality standard and no use is threatened. In Oklahoma, two waterbodies (0.04 percent of the total) are in this category.
- Category 2 - Attaining some of the designated uses; no use is threatened; and insufficient or no data and information is available to determine if the remaining uses are attained or threatened. In Oklahoma, 190 waterbodies (4.5 percent of the total) are in this category.
- Category 3 - Insufficient or no data and information to determine if any designated use is attained. In Oklahoma, 3223 waterbodies (77 percent of the total) are in this category.
- Category 4 - Impaired or threatened for one or more designated uses but does not require the development of a TMDL. In Oklahoma, 47 waterbodies (1.1 percent of the total) are in this category.

- Category 5 - The water quality standard is not attained. The waterbody is impaired or threatened for one or more designated uses by a pollutant(s) and requires a TMDL. Waterbodies in this category comprise the 303(d) list. In Oklahoma, 721 waterbodies (17.2 percent of the total) are in this category.

The draft of the *Water Quality in Oklahoma 2010 Report* is available at <http://www.deq.state.ok.us/WQDnew>. The document may be viewed, downloaded, or printed from this site.

DEQ will hold an informal public meeting at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 24, 2010, at its Oklahoma City office located at 707 North Robinson (at 6th Street). The meeting will take place in the Multipurpose Room on the first floor. Staff from DEQ and other agencies will be on hand to answer questions regarding the draft *Water Quality in Oklahoma 2010 Report*.

The public is invited to review and provide written comments on this draft report. All official comments for the record must be submitted either in writing or by e-mail no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, March 26, 2010. Send written comments by mail to Elena Jigoulina, Water Quality Division, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, P.O. Box 1677, Oklahoma City, OK 73101-1677. The address for e-mail comments is Elena.Jigoulina@deq.ok.gov.

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