



Public Interest Center | P.O. Box 1049 | Columbus, OH | 43216-1049

**FOR RELEASE:** May 13, 2011  
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## **Ohio EPA Rule Proposals Would Make Collecting Third Party Data Easier**

Ohio EPA has proposed updates to rules that allow water quality monitoring performed by watershed groups, state agencies, schools local volunteers and other organizations to be submitted to Ohio EPA for enhancing, improving and maintaining water quality in Ohio.

A public hearing will be held on Tuesday, May 24, 2011, at 2:00 p.m. in Conference Room B, Ohio EPA Lazarus Government Center, 50 West Town Street, Suite 700, Columbus. All visitors should plan to register at the security desk in the entrance lobby, by providing photo identification. Please allow extra time to complete the security registration process. All interested parties are entitled to present oral or written comments concerning the proposed rules at the hearing.

Many watershed groups, community associations, educators, local governmental organizations and private sector businesses collect water quality data in Ohio. The purposes of these sampling efforts vary, as do the methods, quality control and data reporting procedures used. In 2003, the Ohio legislature passed a law to encourage the collection of monitoring data by volunteers, but also to ensure that the data is valid and useful for its intended purpose. In other words, the data should be "credible." Ohio EPA uses the data submitted through the program in several ways dependent upon how the data was collected and whether it meets various review standards.

To promote scientific validity, Ohio EPA established rules that set up specific requirements to participate in the program and to collect data using approved study plans. Data generated under approved project study plans can be submitted through an online data entry system. After several years of experience with the program, Ohio EPA is proposing rule changes to make implementation easier.

Significant changes to the rules would include:

- adding headwater habitat evaluation index criteria, used for small streams, to fulfill a third-party monitoring need since this data is being gathered by local government and watershed groups for other purposes, and could also be included in the state's database;

- adding Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) to the list of agencies recognized as providing credible data, making it easier for Ohio EPA to use their information;
- alternatives for formalized training requirements, such as apprenticeships;
- committing to review and categorize submitted data within one year;
- including an option for automatic approval of level 1 data to save time and reduce costs (level 1 sampling is primarily to promote awareness and is typically conducted by school groups);
- dropping proposed training and testing requirements for chemical water quality assessment since a suitable chemistry method training course is currently unavailable, and Ohio EPA lacks the resources to offer this training; and
- clarifying that Ohio EPA has the authority to use data from public water systems when assessing attainment of water quality standards.

After the close of the public comment period, Ohio EPA will review comments and make necessary changes to the rules. After final changes are made, rules would be adopted.

For more information about the proposed rulemaking governing the credible data submission program, or to receive a copy of the proposed rules, contact Jeff Reynolds (614) 644-3635, or e-mail [jeff.reynolds@epa.state.oh.us](mailto:jeff.reynolds@epa.state.oh.us). [The proposed rules, fact sheet and other information](#) are also available online.

Written testimony can be sent to the attention of Jeff Reynolds either at the e-mail address above, or mailed to Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water, P.O. Box 1049, Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049 by close of business on May 24.