

PUBLIC NOTICE

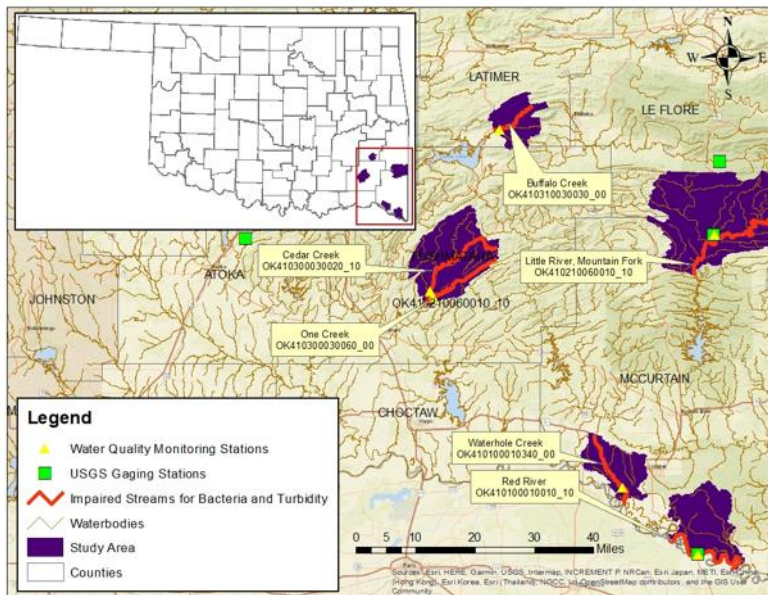
September 3, 2026

AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT BACTERIA AND TURBIDITY TMDLS FOR OKLAHOMA STREAMS IN THE ARKANSAS-WHITE-RED REGION

Proposed Modification to Incorporate the Arkansas-White-Red Region Bacteria and Turbidity TMDLs into Oklahoma's Water Quality Management Plan

Request for Public Comments

Public Comment Period Ends on Monday, October 19, 2026



The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is seeking comments on a draft Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report entitled, "Bacterial and Turbidity TMDLs in the Arkansas-White-Red Region". This report describes the reductions in *E. coli*, enterococci, and total suspended solids (TSS) needed to achieve compliance with water quality standards (WQSs) for bacteria and turbidity to improve water quality in the Oklahoma Arkansas-White-Red Region. This TMDL report is based on Oklahoma's 2022 Integrated Report (IR) and

303(d) list. DEQ is also proposing to incorporate these TMDLs into Oklahoma's Water Quality Management Plan (208 Plan). The full TMDL report can be found on-line at: <https://oklahoma.gov/deq/divisions/water-quality/watershed-planning/tmdl.html>.

Beneficial Uses: The designated beneficial uses for Oklahoma streams in the Arkansas-White-Red Region:

- Aesthetics (AES)
- Agriculture (AG)
- Fish & Wildlife Propagation
 - Warm Water Aquatic Community (WWAC)
 - Cool Water Aquatic Community (CWAC)
- Fish Consumption (FISH)
- Primary Body Contact Recreation (PBCR)

- Public & Private Water Supply (PPWS)
- Sensitive Water Supply (SWS)
- High Quality Water (Hqw)
- Outstanding Resource Water (ORW)

Table 1 is an assessment from Oklahoma's [2022 IR](#) on whether or not the waterbodies in the study area met their designated beneficial uses. The designated beneficial uses addressed in the Arkansas-White-Red Region TMDL Report were PBCr and Fish and Wildlife Propagation (WWAC or CWAC).

Table 1: Assessed Beneficial Uses for Waterbodies in the Study Area

Waterbody ID	Waterbody Name	AES	AG	WWAC	CWAC	FISH	PBCR	PPWS	SWS	HQW	ORW
OK410100010010_10	Red River	I	F	N		F	N	I			
OK410100010340_00	Waterhole Creek	F	F	N		X	N	I			
OK410210060010_10	Little River, Mountain Fork	I	F		N	F	F	F			*
OK410300030020_10	Cedar Creek	F	F		N	X	N	I		*	
OK410300030060_00	One Creek	F	F	N		X	N				
OK410310030030_00	Buffalo Creek	F	F	N		X	N	I	*		
F – Fully supporting		N – Not supporting		I – Insufficient		X – Not assessed		* - Listed		Source: DEQ 2022 Integrated Report	

Impairments: Based on an assessment of water quality monitoring data for the 2022 IR, Oklahoma DEQ has determined that waterbodies in Table 1 are not supporting their designated uses for PBCr or Fish and Wildlife Propagation. Elevated levels of pathogen indicator bacteria in aquatic environments indicate that a waterbody is contaminated with human or animal feces and that a potential health risk exists for individuals exposed to the water. Elevated turbidity levels caused by excessive sediment loading and stream bank erosion impact aquatic biological communities.

- **Bacteria:** The PBCr beneficial use includes swimming. If the PBCr beneficial use is not met, that means there are too many bacteria in that waterbody. Many types of bacteria are pathogens which are things that can cause disease in animals or plants. According to the WQSs, bacterial testing is done for *E. coli* and enterococci. They may be found in fecal matters entering waterbodies from sources such as sewage discharges, leaking septic tanks, or runoff from animal feedlots. Therefore, they are used as surrogate for pathogen bacteria in this TMDL.
- **Turbidity:** When more than 10% of turbidity samples in a waterbody are greater than the turbidity standard (50 NTU for WWAC or 10 NTU for CWAC) based on long-term record of most recent 5 years, the Fish and Wildlife Propagation beneficial use will be considered not attained. Turbidity is a measure of water clarity, so it cannot be expressed as a mass load. Total suspended solids (TSS) are therefore modeled and evaluated as a surrogate for turbidity using a site-specific relationship derived from TSS and turbidity measurements.

Watershed: The Arkansas-White-Red Region is located in the southeastern part of Oklahoma. The waterbodies and their watersheds addressed in this report are scattered over Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain, and Pushmataha counties. The watersheds range in

size from 28,480 acres (One Creek, OK410300030060_00) to 178,031 acres (Little River, Mountain Fork, OK410210060010_10).

Point Source Discharges:

- **OPDES regulated municipal wastewater treatment facilities:** There is a municipal facility in the study area. Municipal WWTFs are designated with a Standard Industrial Code (SIC) number 4952. They discharge organic TSS with limits for CBOD₅ so they are not considered a potential source of turbidity. Therefore, the Town of Haworth will get bacteria WLA only in the study area. This can be found in Table 3-1 of the TMDL report.
- **OPDES regulated industrial wastewater treatment facilities:** There is an industrial facility (Weyerhaeuser Company) in the Waterhole Creek watershed and Waterhole Creek is impaired for enterococci and *E. coli*. Weyerhaeuser Company is not given a WLA because it is not considered as a bacterial source.
- **OPDES regulated stormwater discharges:** DEQ regulates stormwater discharges from Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s), industrial sites, and construction sites. However, DEQ's stormwater program does not include the discharges from Indian Country lands, discharges related to oil & gas extraction, or discharges associated with agricultural purposes. For details about DEQ's Stormwater Program, go to <https://oklahoma.gov/deq/permits/water-permits/stormwater-permitting.html>.
 - **MS4s:** There are no MS4s in the study area.
 - **Multi-Sector General Permit (MSGP):** An NPDES permit authorization to discharge stormwater from an industrial activity must be obtained prior to the start of any operations. The owner/operator permit holder must also develop and implement a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWP3) for the industrial facility maintained at the site. There are three MSGP facilities in the study area. This can be found in Table 3-2 of the TMDL report.
 - **Construction Sites:** A [Construction General Permit \(OKR10\)](#) is required for any stormwater discharges associated with construction activities that result in land disturbance of equal to or greater than one (1) acre, or less than one (1) acre if they are part of a larger common plan of development or sale that totals at least one (1) acre. A [stormwater pollution prevention plan \(SWP3\)](#) must be developed and implemented according to the requirements of the OKR10 permit. There were four OKR10 permits for construction projects in the study area. This can be found in Table 3-3 of the TMDL report.
- **No-Discharge Facilities:** For the purposes of these TMDLs, it is assumed that no-discharge facilities (such as towns with total retention lagoons) do not contribute indicator bacterial or TSS loading. However, It is possible that the wastewater collection system associated with no-discharge facilities could be a source of pollutant loading to streams, or that discharges from the WWTP may occur during large rainfall events that exceed the storage capacity of the wastewater system. There aren't any no-discharge facilities in the study area.
- **Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSO):** SSOs are a common result of the aging wastewater infrastructure around Oklahoma. Oklahoma has been ahead of other states and, in some cases EPA itself, in its handling of SSOs. Due to the widespread

nature of the SSO problem, DEQ has focused its limited resources to first target SSOs that result in definitive environmental harm (such as fish kills) or lead to citizen complaints. All SSOs falling into these two categories are addressed through DEQ's formal enforcement process. While not all sewer overflows are reported, DEQ has some data. For example in the study area between 1992 and 2022, 37 SSO occurrences were reported with amounts ranging from a minimal quantity to four million gallons. Details about these SSOs are summarized in Table 3-4 of the TMDL report.

- NPDES regulated **Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs)**: The [Agricultural Environmental Management Services \(AEMS\)](#) is a program within the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF). Through regulations established by the Oklahoma Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) Act, Swine Feeding Operation (SFO) Act, and the Registered Poultry Feeding Operation (PFO) Act, AEMS helps develop, coordinate, and oversee environmental policies and programs aimed at protecting the Oklahoma environment from pollutants associated with agricultural animals and their waste. This is done through the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs). BMPs include dikes, berms, terraces, ditches or other similar structures used to isolate animal waste from outside surface drainage. ODAFF is the NPDES-permitting authority for CAFOs and SFOs in Oklahoma under what ODAFF calls the Agriculture Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (AgPDES). PFOs are smaller animal feeding operations so they are not required to get NPDES permits. They are only required to register with ODAFF and follow PFO rules. There are 25 PFOs located within the study area.

Nonpoint Source Discharges:

- Fecal coliform loads from the four major nonpoint source categories (commercially raised farm animals, pets, deer, and septic tanks) were estimated in Section 3.3 of the TMDL report.
- **Wildlife** – Estimated numbers of wild deer range from 387 to 2,409 in the study watersheds.
- **Farm animals** – Estimated numbers of farm animals are summarized in Table 3-10 of the TMDL report. The magnitude of loading to land surface from farm animals is the largest, but it may not reflect the magnitude of loading to a stream.
- **Pets** – Estimated numbers of pets (cats and dogs) range from 223 to 3,582 in the study watersheds.
- **Failing Septic Systems** – Estimated numbers of failing septic systems range from 12 to 140 in the study watersheds.

TMDL Calculations:

The purpose of a TMDL is to identify sources of pollutants in a watershed and calculate the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. The study area in Arkansas-White-Red Region contains waterbodies that are in violation of Oklahoma WQS with respect to bacteria and/or turbidity. TMDL calculates the reduction in bacteria and TSS that would be needed in order for these streams to be in compliance with Oklahoma WQS. This was done using load duration curves. The calculations include present and future sources as well as a

margin of safety. For more information on how the TMDLs were developed, read Sections 4 & 5 and Appendixes B of the TMDL report.

TMDL Results:

The TMDLs were calculated using load duration curves in this report and Table 2 indicates the amount that each pollutant will need to be reduced [Percent Reduction Goal (PRG)] in order for an impaired waterbody to meet water quality standards and its designated beneficial uses:

Table 2: PRG Needed for Waterbody to meet Water Quality Standards

WBID	Waterbody Name	These impairments must be reduced by the following amounts in order to meet water quality standards.		
		<i>E. coli</i>	Enterococci	Turbidity
OK410100010010 10	Red River		39.4%	
OK410100010340 00	Waterhole Creek	42.2%	79.7%	
OK410210060010 10	Little River, Mountain Fork			23.7%
OK410300030020 10	Cedar Creek	17.3%		
OK410300030060 00	One Creek	40.3%		
OK410310030030 00	Buffalo Creek	32.8%		

Providing comments

- DEQ invites your comments. The comment period will be open for 45 days. The TMDL report is a draft document and is subject to change based on comments received during the public participation process.
- You may also request a public meeting in writing. If there is a significant degree of interest, DEQ will schedule a public meeting.

All official comments for the record must be submitted either in writing or by e-mail before the end of the comment period. DEQ will prepare a responsiveness summary addressing all comments received. After evaluating comments received and making any necessary changes, the TMDL report will be submitted to EPA for final approval. The final results of the TMDL will be incorporated into Oklahoma's Water Quality Management Plan.

Please submit your comments in writing to: Soojung Lim, Water Quality Division, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, P.O. Box 1677, Oklahoma City, OK 73101-1677; (405) 702-8195; E-mail: Water.Comments@deq.ok.gov

Comments must be received by 4:30 pm on Monday, October 19, 2026.

Obtaining copies: You may view the full TMDL Report by going to the DEQ website at <https://oklahoma.gov/deq/divisions/water-quality/watershed-planning/tmdl.html> or by picking up copies at the DEQ main office, Water Quality Division, 707 North Robinson, Oklahoma City from 8:30 am – 4:00 pm. A document copying fee may apply.

You are receiving this notice because you are either on DEQ's list to receive all public notices, or you requested notices about your watershed. In addition to proposed TMDL reports, DEQ's Watershed Planning Section sends out public notices about proposed wasteload allocations (208 Plans), proposed changes to the CPP or Integrated Report, 404 projects, and 401 Certification requests.

If you would like to receive any or all of these public notices via e-mail, please send your e-mail address to Water.Comments@deq.ok.gov. Also, please let us know if you want to receive notices for the entire State or just for your [watershed](#).

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