WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §22-11-7B

§22-11-7b. Water quality standards; implementation of antidegradation procedures; procedure to determine comp1iance with the biologic component of the narrative water quality standard.

NOTE: During the 2017 Regular Session of the Legislature, this section was amended by House Bill 2506 and Senate Bill 687 and there has been no judicial ruling to determine which, if either, amendments prevail. Both versions are provided here.

As amended by House Bill 2506:

(a) All authority to propose rules for legislative approval and implement water quality standards is vested in the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection.

(b) All meetings with the secretary or any employee of the department and any interested party which are convened for the purpose of making a decision or deliberating toward a decision as to the form and substance of the rule governing water quality standards or variances thereto shall be held in accordance with article nine-a, chapter six of this code. When the secretary is considering the form and substance of the rules governing water quality standards, the following are not meetings pursuant to article nine-a, chapter six of this code: (i) Consultations between the department's employees or its consultants, contractors or agents; (ii) consultations with other state or federal agencies and the department's employees or its consultants, contractors or agents; or (iii) consultations between the secretary, the department's employees or its consultants, contractors or agents with any interested party for the purpose of collecting facts and explaining state and federal requirements relating to a site specific change or variance.

(c) In order to carry out the purposes of this chapter, the secretary shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code setting standards of water quality applicable to both the surface waters and groundwaters of this state. Standards of quality with respect to surface waters shall protect the public health and welfare, wildlife, fish and aquatic life and the present and prospective future uses of the water for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, scenic and other legitimate beneficial uses thereof. The water quality standards of the secretary may not specify the design of equipment, type of construction or particular method which a person shall use to reduce the discharge of a pollutant. For implementing human health criteria for the protection of drinking water, the Secretary shall calculate permit limits using the harmonic mean flow and may determine the point of compliance for a permittee’s discharge pursuant to the mixing zone provisions of the Legislative rule entitled Requirements Governing Water Quality Standards, 47 C.S.R. 2: Provided, That the Secretary may allow mixing zones to overlap, but not to go beyond a point one-half mile upstream of a public water supply. At locations where mixing zones are allowed to overlap, the Secretary shall require permittees to indicate on their required signage an indication that mixing zones overlap in a particular

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vicinity.

(d) The secretary shall establish the antidegradation implementation procedures as required by 40 C. F. R. 131.12(a) which apply to regulated activities that have the potential to affect water quality. The secretary shall propose for legislative approval, pursuant to article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of the code, legislative rules to establish implementation procedures which include specifics of the review depending upon the existing uses of the water body segment that would be affected, the level of protection or "tier" assigned to the applicable water body segment, the nature of the activity and the extent to which existing water quality would be degraded. Any final classification determination of a water as a Tier 2.5 water (Water of Special Concern) does not become effective until that determination is approved by the Legislature through the legislative rule-making process as provided in article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of the code.

(e) All remining variances shall be applied for and considered by the secretary and any variance granted shall be consistent with 33 U. S. C. Section 1311(p) of the Federal Water Control Act. At a minimum, when considering an application for a remining variance the secretary shall consider the data and information submitted by the applicant for the variance; and comments received at a public comment period and public hearing. The secretary may not grant a variance without requiring the applicant to improve the instream water quality as much as is reasonably possible by applying best available technology economically achievable using best professional judgment. Any such requirement shall be included as a permit condition. The secretary may not grant a variance without a demonstration by the applicant that the coal remining operation will result in the potential for improved instream water quality as a result of the remining operation. The secretary may not grant a variance where he or she determines that degradation of the instream water quality will result from the remining operation.

(f) The secretary shall propose rules measuring compliance with the biologic component of West Virginia's narrative water quality standard requires evaluation of the holistic health of the aquatic ecosystem and a determination that the stream: (i) Supports a balanced aquatic community that is diverse in species composition; (ii) contains appropriate trophic levels of fish, in streams that have flows sufficient to support fish populations; and (iii) the aquatic community is composed of benthic invertebrate assemblages sufficient to perform the biological functions necessary to support fish communities within the assessed reach, or, if the assessed reach has insufficient flows to support a fish community, in those downstream reaches where fish are present. The secretary shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code that implement the provisions of this subsection. Rules promulgated pursuant to this subsection may not establish measurements for biologic components of West Virginia's narrative water quality standards that would establish standards less protective than requirements that exist at the time of enactment of the amendments to this subsection by the Legislature during the 2012 regular session.

As amended by Senate Bill 687:

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(a) All authority to promulgate rules and implement water quality standards is vested in the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection.

(b) All meetings with the secretary or any employee of the department and any interested party which are convened for the purpose of making a decision or deliberating toward a decision as to the form and substance of the rule governing water quality standards or variances thereto shall be held in accordance with the provisions of article nine-a, chapter six of this code. When the secretary is considering the form and substance of the rules governing water quality standards, the following are not meetings pursuant to article nine-a, chapter six of this code: (i) Consultations between the department's employees or its consultants, contractors or agents; (ii) consultations with other state or federal agencies and the department's employees or its consultants, contractors or agents; or (iii) consultations between the secretary, the department's employees or its consultants, contractors or agents with any interested party for the purpose of collecting facts and explaining state and federal requirements relating to a site specific change or variance.

(c) In order to carry out the purposes of this chapter, the secretary shall promulgate legislative rules in accordance with the provisions of article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code setting standards of water quality applicable to both the surface waters and groundwaters of this state. Standards of quality with respect to surface waters shall protect the public health and welfare, wildlife, fish and aquatic life and the present and prospective future uses of the water for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, scenic and other legitimate beneficial uses thereof. The water quality standards of the secretary may not specify the design of equipment, type of construction or particular method which a person shall use to reduce the discharge of a pollutant.

(d) The secretary shall establish the antidegradation implementation procedures as required by 40 C. F. R. 131.12(a) which apply to regulated activities that have the potential to affect water quality. The secretary shall propose for legislative approval, pursuant to article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of the code, legislative rules to establish implementation procedures which include specifics of the review depending upon the existing uses of the water body segment that would be affected, the level of protection or "tier" assigned to the applicable water body segment, the nature of the activity and the extent to which existing water quality would be degraded. Any final classification determination of a water as a Tier 2.5 water (Water of Special Concern) does not become effective until that determination is approved by the Legislature through the legislative rule-making process as provided in article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of the code.

(e) All remining variances shall be applied for and considered by the secretary and any variance granted shall be consistent with 33 U. S. C. Section 1311(p) of the Federal Water Control Act. At a minimum, when considering an application for a remining variance the secretary shall consider the data and information submitted by the applicant for the variance; and comments received at a public comment period and public hearing. The secretary may not grant a variance without requiring the applicant to improve the instream water quality as much as is reasonably possible by applying best available technology

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economically achievable using best professional judgment. Any such requirement will be included as a permit condition. The secretary may not grant a variance without a demonstration by the applicant that the coal remining operation will result in the potential for improved instream water quality as a result of the remining operation. The secretary may not grant a variance where he or she determines that degradation of the instream water quality will result from the remining operation.

(f) The secretary shall propose rules measuring compliance with the aquatic life component of West Virginia's narrative water quality standard requires evaluation of the holistic health of the aquatic ecosystem and a determination that the stream: (i) contains appropriate trophic levels of fish, in streams that have flows sufficient to support fish populations; and (ii) the aquatic community is composed of benthic invertebrate assemblages sufficient to perform the biological functions necessary to support fish communities within the assessed reach, or, if the assessed reach has insufficient flows to support a fish community, in those downstream reaches where fish are present. The secretary shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with the provisions of article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code that implement the provisions of this subsection. Rules promulgated pursuant to this subsection may not establish measurements for biologic components of West Virginia's narrative water quality standards that would establish standards less protective than legislatively-approved rules that existed at the time of enactment of the amendments to this subsection by the Legislature during the 2012 regular session.

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