

DEPARTMENT: POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office Memorandum

DATE: November 10, 2011

TO: MPCA Citizens' Board

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SUBJECT: Overview of Minnesota's Water Quality Standards

Water quality standards are fundamental tools that help protect Minnesota's abundant and valuable water resources from pollution. Minnesota adopted its first statewide water quality standards in 1967. Some of these first standards are unchanged and just as pertinent today; others have been updated. Many new standards and significant new regulations have been added since 1967. As reflected in the federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, better known as the Clean Water Act, states are required to review their water quality standards every three years and adopt standards that meet minimum national requirements, including addressing additional pollutants that may threaten beneficial uses.

Recent and upcoming Board agenda items involve the interpretation and application of water quality standards through permits and total maximum daily load studies. The purpose of this agenda item is to:

- 1) Provide the Board with additional background and context regarding Minnesota's water quality standards, including site-specific standards and variances from standards, to help inform the Board's decision-making; and
- 2) Solicit Board feedback on efforts to communicate with citizens, permittees and stakeholders about water quality standards.

MJS/SL:cmbg