

WATER QUALITY NEED CATEGORIES

Category Descriptions

Surface Water Category Descriptions

1. EPA Approved TMDL or Draft DNR Approved TMDL

The project (or the location where primary water quality benefit originates) is within the area covered by an EPA-Approved TMDL, or a draft TMDL that has been approved by the DNR and forwarded to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for review, and the proposed project will reduce the nonpoint source pollutant(s) addressed by the TMDL.

2. TMDL In Development

The project (or the location where primary water quality benefit originates) is within the area that will be covered by a TMDL that is actively in development by the DNR or an independent third-party, and the proposed project will reduce the nonpoint source pollutant(s) addressed by the TMDL. Sufficient resources are available for TMDL development to complete the TMDL within the next two to three years.

3. Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters

The project (or the location where primary water quality benefit originates) is upstream and in the same HUC12, or in the immediately upstream HUC 12 of a water body (lake or stream) on the latest Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters, and the cause of the water quality impairment is nonpoint source pollution, and this project will reduce the type of nonpoint source pollutant for which the water is listed. Generally, these waters are identified as being in the “nonpoint source dominated” or “point source/nonpoint source blend” categories.

4. Wisconsin’s Nutrient Reduction Strategy – Top Watershed for Phosphorus

The project (or the location where primary water quality benefit originates) is within a watershed identified as a “Top Watershed for Phosphorus” in Wisconsin’s Nutrient Reduction Strategy and the water quality goals of the project deal directly with reducing the amount of nonpoint sources of phosphorus carried in runoff to surface waters. For more information about Wisconsin’s Nutrient Reduction Strategy, see <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/surfacewater/nutrientstrategy.html>.

5. Watershed Protection Priority

The project (or the location where primary water quality benefit originates) is located in a HUC 12 that is identified as a Watershed Protection Priority in Wisconsin’s Healthy Watershed/High-Quality Waters Assessment. Specifically, for the purposes of this grant application, such watersheds are either within the Statewide or HUC6 top 30% of watersheds for protection priority. To learn more about Wisconsin’s Watershed Protection Priority within the Healthy Watershed/High-Quality Waters Assessment, see <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/SurfaceWater/HQW.html>.

6. Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters

A project with water quality goals directly dealing with prevention of degradation due to nonpoint sources of outstanding resource waters (ORW) (per s. NR 102.10) or exceptional resource waters (ERW)(per s. NR 102.12), and that is located (or the location where primary water quality benefit originates is) upstream in the same HUC12, or in the HUC 12 immediately upstream of, the ORW/ERW water body (lake or stream). For more information about ORW/ERW, see <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/surfacewater/orwerw.html>.

7. Other Areas of Special Natural Resource Interest (ASNRI)

A project with water quality goals directly dealing with prevention of degradation due to nonpoint sources of pollution in areas of special natural resource interest (ASNRI), and that is located (or the location where primary water quality benefit originates is) upstream in the same HUC12, or in the HUC 12 immediately upstream of, the ASNRI water body (lake or stream). For more information about ASNRI waters, see <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/surfacewater/orwerw.html>.

8. Surface Water Quality

A project with water quality goals directly dealing with prevention of surface water quality degradation due to nonpoint source pollution.

Groundwater Category Descriptions

9. Exceeds Groundwater Enforcement Standard (ES)

A project with groundwater quality goals located in area where representative information indicates there are levels for NPS contaminants that exceed groundwater enforcement standards (ES). Representative information includes at least one sample per square mile, and of the samples taken, greater than 10% should exceed the ES.

10. Wisconsin's Nutrient Reduction Strategy – Top Watershed for Nitrates

The project (or the location where water quality need originates) is within a watershed identified as a “Top Watershed for Nitrates” in Wisconsin's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, and the water quality goals of the project directly deal with reducing nonpoint sources of nitrates to groundwater. For more information about Wisconsin's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, see <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/surfacewater/nutrientstrategy.html>.

11. Exceeds Groundwater Preventive Action Limit (PAL)

A project with groundwater quality goals where representative information indicates there are levels for NPS contaminants that exceed groundwater preventive action limits (PAL). Representative information includes at least one sample per square mile, and of the samples taken, greater than 10% exceed the PAL.

12. Groundwater Quality

A project within a geological area defined in s. NR 151.015(18) as susceptible to groundwater contamination, as described in the [Groundwater Susceptibility](#) document.

Where To Look Up Information

Watershed Based Water Quality Need Categories

The following water quality need categories are watershed based. Applicants can determine whether their project is eligible for water quality need points in the categories, by determining whether the location where their project's primary water quality benefit originates is within one of these watersheds.

Applicants can look up their watershed(s) in the DNR's Watershed Restoration Viewer or the Watershed Lookup table found on the grant webpages to determine whether their project watershed falls into one of these categories.

Water Quality Need Category	Restoration Viewer Theme
EPA Approved TMDL or Draft DNR Approved TMDL	Statewide TMDL Status Map
TMDL In Development	Statewide TMDL Status Map
Wisconsin's Nutrient Reduction Strategy – Top Watershed for Phosphorus	Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters Protecting Wisconsin's Water Resources Wisconsin DNR
Wisconsin's Nutrient Reduction Strategy – Top Watershed for Nitrates	Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters Protecting Wisconsin's Water Resources Wisconsin DNR
Watershed Protection Priority	Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters Protecting Wisconsin's Water Resources Wisconsin DNR

Surface Water Resource Based Water Quality Need Categories

The following water quality need categories are water resource based. Applicants can determine whether their project's is eligible for water quality need points in the categories, by determining whether the location where primary water quality benefit originates (of their project) is upstream of one of these water resources in the same HUC 12, or in the HUC 12 immediately upstream of the primary HUC 12.

Applicants can look use the [DNR's Surface Water Data Viewer](#) to determine whether their project is upstream of a surface water resource in one of these categories. See [Geographic & Water Resource Information For Watersheds](#) for information on how to use the surface water data viewer.

Water Quality Need Category	Layer Group	Layer Name
Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters	Assessments & Impairments	303(d) listed Impaired waters
Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters	Clean Water Act Standards & Uses	O/ERW Waters
Other Areas of Special Natural Resource Interest	Priority Navigable Waterways	Areas of Special Natural Resource Interest

Groundwater Water Resource Based Water Quality Need Categories

The categories listed below are groundwater resource based. Applicants can determine whether their project is eligible for water quality need points in the categories using local groundwater monitoring data and/or by contacting their DNR Regional Drinking Water & Groundwater staff.

Water Quality Need Category

Exceeds Groundwater Enforcement Standard (ES)

Exceeds Groundwater Preventive Action Limit (PAL)

Groundwater Susceptible to Contamination by NPS Pollutants

Groundwater Susceptible to Contamination by NPS Pollutants means a project within a geological area defined in s. NR 151.015(18) as susceptible to groundwater contamination, as described in the [Groundwater Susceptibility](#) document.