# Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) FAQ

## Why do we need to create TMDLs?

Wisconsin is required by the Clean Water Act to develop TMDLs for all waters on our Impaired Waters List. The EPA oversees the federal TMDL program, while Wisconsin is currently granted authority to implement our own program.

## What is an "impaired water"?

Every two years, the Wisconsin DNR drafts the Integrated Report which includes the Impaired Waters List (aka the 303(d) list). This list includes rivers, streams, and lakes that are not meeting water quality standards or designated uses (e.g. Fishing, swimming, etc). This list is then submitted to EPA for approval.

## What does the EPA require of states regarding TMDLs?

TMDLs are required for all impaired waters. Since states can't do them all at once, the EPA requires that states complete TMDLs for a certain number of impaired waters each year.

## Do TMDLs create new rules or regulations?

TMDLs do not create new water quality standards or any new rules. DNR uses current rules in existing programs to implement TMDLs (e.g. NR 217, NR 216, NR 151, etc).

*Above: Toxic blue-green algae blooms resulting from excess nutrients in lake water.*

*Left: Satellite image of a blue-green algae bloom on Petenwell Lake.*

## How is a TMDL implemented?

TMDLs establish pollutant load allocations to both point and nonpoint sources in order to achieve pollutant load reductions needed to meet water quality goals. Once a TMDL is developed and approved, it must be implemented to reduce the amount of pollutants entering the water.

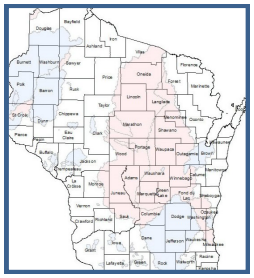
For TMDL implementation to be successful, both point and nonpoint sources must meet their load allocations. For point source dischargers, the wasteload allocations delineated in the TMDL will be expressed in their Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) permits. For nonpoint source implementation, the goal is to maximize opportunities for water quality restoration by using existing, available resources, including:

- **Technical Assistance** such as that provided by county land conservation offices, NRCS, and DATCP;
- **Financial Assistance** such as Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) Grants [1]; and
- **Regulatory Authority** such as agricultural performance standards and manure management prohibitions [2].

1 http://dnr.wi.gov/aid/targetedrunoff.html

2 http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/nonpoint/agperformancestandards.html

## Where are TMDLs in Wisconsin currently being developed and implemented?



Visit the TMDL website to access an interactive map and learn more about where TMDLs are being developed and implemented in Wisconsin.

**http://dnr.wi.gov/water/tmdls/**

## Does the DNR have data showing the effectiveness of TMDL implementation in Wisconsin or in other states?

Wisconsin is in the early stages of TMDL implementation but already has some water quality restoration success stories resulting from TMDLs. These include **Eagle and Joos Valley Creeks** (http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/success319/upload/wi_eagle_joos.pdf) and **German Valley Branch** (http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/success319/wi_german.cfm) in Dane County.

Additionally, there have been several successful watershed projects in Wisconsin, which are similar to TMDLs. Click on the links below to find out more about what has been done and is being done in Wisconsin and in other states:

- **A clearinghouse of watershed projects:** http://nonpoint.cals.wisc.edu/?page_id=14
- **West Branch Sugar River:** http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/success319/wi_sugar.cfm
- **Bass Lake:** http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/success319/wi_bass.cfm
- **EPA's "TMDLs at work" page:** http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/lawsguidance/cwa/tmdl/TMDLsWork.cfm

## Are there any examples of other states that have effectively achieved nonpoint source reductions as part of TMDL implementation?

Yes, there are many examples of states working with NPSs successfully. The EPA has a compiled list of success stories by state, which can be found online (http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/success319/)

**Engaging partners early in the TMDL development process is an essential component to moving TMDL projects forward and successfully meeting water quality goals.**

Photo credit: James Brodzeller

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