

Fact Sheet on the U.S. Virgin Islands' 2014 Impaired Waters List

The EPA has approved the U.S. Virgin Islands' 2014 list of impaired waters requiring a total maximum daily load (TMDL). The U.S. Virgin Islands' 2014 list presents information on impaired waters, pollutants causing impairment and pollutant sources. The list is important because it focuses management attention on impaired waters. The EPA will continue to build partnerships throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands to ensure that impaired waters receive proper attention.

How States Report on the Quality of their Waters

The Clean Water Act requires states (Section 502 of the Act defines "state" to include the territories) to assess the quality of their water bodies and to report their findings every two years to the EPA. States adopt specific water quality standards, which serve as the foundation for water quality management. Water quality standards identify the designated uses for each body of water (such as swimming, drinking, shellfish harvesting, etc.) and set scientific criteria to protect those uses. During the assessment process, states compare the collected data to the established water quality standards.

In addition to reporting on the overall quality of all waters, the Clean Water Act directs states to identify and list specific water bodies where water quality is impaired or threatened by pollutants. This requirement is found under section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act and the list of impaired waters is often referred to as the "303(d) list."

- Impaired – A body of water that does not meet water quality standards.
- Threatened – A body of water that is expected to be impaired within two years.

Each impairment reflected on the 303(d) list requires a calculation of the maximum amount of the impairing pollutant that a water body can receive and still meet water quality standards. This calculation is called the TMDL. TMDLs include reductions for pollution sources impacting the water body which, when achieved, will result in the attainment of water quality standards in the impaired water body.

In certain cases, impaired or threatened waters may not appear on a state's 303(d) list. If a TMDL has already been devised for the water, another required control measure is expected to result in the attainment of water quality standards in a reasonable amount of time, or the impairment or threat is the result of *pollution*¹, then the water may not be included.

Water quality monitoring data and other information must be considered by states in assessment and reporting efforts. Monitoring is carried out by national, state, local and tribal authorities, universities, dischargers, volunteers and others, and can include measurements of physical and chemical parameters (temperature, dissolved oxygen, suspended sediment, nutrients, metals, oils, and/or pesticides, for example); examinations of streamflow, water color, condition of stream banks and lake shores; observations of communities of aquatic wildlife; and sampling of fish tissue or sediment. Land use data, predictive models and land surveys may also be used.

¹ Examples of pollution include segments impaired solely due to lack of adequate flow or to stream channelization.

Summary of 2014 Findings

The U.S. Virgin Islands' 303(d) list includes 196 instances where a pollutant is causing a designated use impairment.

- The most common pollutants causing impairment include:
 - turbidity (34.18% of impairments)
 - dissolved oxygen (23.47%)
 - pathogens (22.45%)
 - pH (12.25%)

- New pollutants on the 2014 list were included for the following waterbodies:
 - Salt River Bay (Enterococci)
 - Christiansted Harbor, East (Enterococci, Fecal Coliform)
 - Green Cay Beach (Enterococci)
 - Coral Harbor (Enterococci)
 - Turner Hole Backreef (Enterococci)
 - Bugby Hole (Enterococci)
 - Hess Oil Virgin Islands Harbor (Enterococci)
 - Sandy Point Nearshore West (Enterococci)
 - Good Hope (Enterococci)
 - Great Lameshur Bay (pH, Turbidity)
 - Genti, nearshore (Turbidity)
 - Southwest St. John HUC14, Offshore (Turbidity)

The 303(d) list also specifies those water bodies that no longer require listing. Removal of a water body from the 303(d) list, called delisting, may indicate that the water is restored, that the water is receiving management attention that is expected to result in the attainment of water quality standards, or other factors (including errors).

- 11 waters for Turbidity/Color were delisted because they were previously listed in error.

The original listing decision was incorrect because these 11 waters are exempt from the color and turbidity criteria based on the USVI Water Quality Standards' Turbidity/Color Exemption (Title 12 Chapter 7 Section 186-11(b)).

How the Water Quality Sampling and Reporting Process Works

There are 136 near-shore sampling sites around the U.S. Virgin Islands: 55 stations around St. Croix, 60 stations around St. Thomas, and 21 around St. John. These stations are currently being monitored quarterly by an EPA contractor. The U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) expanded the monitoring network to include deep-water offshore sites at the outer rim of the U.S. Virgin Islands' three-mile boundary: 5 stations off St. John, 8 stations off St. Thomas, and 13 stations off St. Croix. The offshore stations are monitored by DPNR staff once per year.

The U.S. Virgin Island Beach Program conducts monitoring in accordance with a tiered sampling plan established in 2014. Thirty-three (33) tier 1 beaches are monitored on a weekly basis. Five (5) tier 2 beaches are monitored weekly on a seasonal basis. Six (6) tier 3 beaches are

monitored when the program deems it necessary (i.e., after storm events; if there are special events planned for that area; or if there is a suspected contamination event).

The Beach Program has recognized that there are several local seasons that have a generally higher concentration of recreational beach users than others. These seasons include the camping season (April and May) and the winter season (October to December) when there are a significant number of mainland visitors using the resources at the Territorial resorts and timeshares. Tier 2 beaches will not be sampled during January-March or in the month of September. All Tier 1 and Tier 2 beaches will be monitored weekly during the summer season (June to August).

In addition, for the 2014 303(d) listing cycle, DPNR sent letters soliciting water quality monitoring data to a wide variety of organizations, including academic institutions, government agencies and nongovernmental organizations. Once received, DPNR assembles all existing and readily available data and evaluates this data against the U.S. Virgin Islands' water quality standards, using methods described in the U.S. Virgin Islands' Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology. These assessments inform the U.S. Virgin Islands' 303(d)/305(b) Integrated Report.

How to Get Involved

Recognizing that stakeholders throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands collect valuable water quality data, DPNR has established a process that allows groups and individuals to submit information for use in the Territory's assessment work.

To submit data for consideration during future 303(d) assessment cycles, submissions (data, photographs, etc.) must be sent to DPNR. When the data is submitted as part of the 303(d) or 305(b) process, stakeholder information is considered as soon as it is received. Parties submitting information should send materials to:

Department of Planning and Natural Resources
Division of Environmental Protection
45 Mars Hill
Frederiksted, St. Croix, USVI 00841
Fax: (340) 773-9310

Alternatively, information can be sent via email to: ep_dpnr@dpnr.vi.gov. If you have questions or would like to speak directly with a DPNR representative, call 340-773-1082.

DPNR also provides the opportunity for formal public comment on its draft 303(d) list. This is typically announced in early January of even-numbered years via newspaper (*The Virgin Islands Daily News* and *The Avis*), and comments are accepted during a 30-day period.

EPA Contacts for the U.S. Virgin Islands 303(d) List

If you have questions or concerns, contact EPA's U.S. Virgin Islands water quality assessment and 303(d) list expert, Mr. Brent Gaylord, at (212-637-3868) or email Gaylord.Brent@epa.gov.