Oklahoma's 2016 303(d)/TMDL State Prioritization Framework

In December 2013, EPA announced a new framework for implementing the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 303(d) program – *A Long-Term Vision for Assessment, Restoration, and Protection under the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Program*. Under the guidance of this Vision, states were tasked with developing a list of priority waters to be addressed through TMDL development or protection plans by 2022.

As the agency responsible for administering the CWA 303(d) program in Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) coordinated the development of the State's list of priority waterbodies for the TMDL Vision. DEQ hosted meetings and discussions with personnel from the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) to review the 2014 Oklahoma 303(d) list develop the list of priorities. OWRB and OCC were selected for this workgroup, as they are the two state agencies responsible for collecting the majority of water quality data in Oklahoma.

The initial meeting of the workgroup consisted of a discussion of all the pollutant impairments included on Oklahoma's 2014 303(d) list. The workgroup subsequently narrowed the main focus of the priority waters to those impaired for metals and chlorophyll-a. These impairments were selected due to the possible detrimental effects on water supplies. The workgroup also determined that a few large lake projects should be addressed. OCC presented a list of planned 319 projects for consideration. The workgroup decided that only specified pollutants on the selected waterbodies would be identified on the priority list for TMDL development.

OWRB prepared a list of approximately half of the metals listings to be assigned the highest priority. OWRB used the following logic to select the priority waterbodies listed for metals:

- Magnitude – The first factor used for prioritization was magnitude of exceedance. Lead was used as the primary impairment for this process as it is the most commonly listed metal impairment and is often listed for more than one beneficial use impairment. Monitoring sites with values well over the 5 ppb level were given the highest priority.
- Multiple causes – Additional emphasis was placed on waterbodies with multiple metals listings.
- Watershed – The final step in the process was to add waterbodies based on their proximity to those identified in by magnitude and multiple causes. Metals impaired waterbodies within watersheds selected using the first two factors were added to facilitate efficient development of TMDLs.

OCC provided a list of the agency's planned watershed projects identified in the 2014 Unified Watershed Assessment. The Unified Watershed Assessment methodology and results are presented in the report titled *Oklahoma's Nonpoint Source Management Program 2014-2024*. This document can be viewed at http://www.ok.gov/conservation/documents/2014%20NPS%20Mgmt%20Plan.pdf. Waterbodies from the OCC list of planned projects that were conducive to TMDL development were selected for the TMDL Vision priority waterbody list. One of the waterbodies on the OCC list was selected for a watershed

protection plan. This waterbody, Pennington Creek, is one of the highest quality waters in Oklahoma and was identified as an excellent candidate for protection.

Sensitive Water Supply (SWS) lakes were chosen as another area of emphasis. Higher priority was given to SWS lakes that serve smaller communities and those lakes that have both chlorophyll-a and dissolved oxygen impairments. Seventy-five percent of the chlorophyll-a impaired SWS lakes were selected for inclusion on the priority list.

Three large lakes were selected as priorities. Fort Gibson Lake was included based on the high priority assigned to the lake watershed using the prioritization process outlined in Oklahoma's 2014 Integrated Report. Lake Oologah was selected due to its importance as a major water supply source for the city of Tulsa. Grand Lake o' the Cherokees was chosen as a pilot project for a TMDL alternative to address the dissolved oxygen impairment on the lower portion of the lake.

The Draft Oklahoma TMDL Vision Priority List was submitted to EPA Region 6 on July 23, 2015. The submittal included a list of the priority waterbody-pollutant pair combinations and a GIS file defining the waterbodies on the priority list.

The selected waterbodies will be reviewed biannually to determine if any waterbodies on the list should remain on the priority waterbody list. Waterbodies that have been removed from future 303(d) lists due to delistings for attainment or water quality standards changes will be evaluated to determine if the waterbody should be replaced on the priority waterbody list with a different waterbody.