



2898 (cell)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** January 16, 2009  
**CONTACT:** Enesta Jones, EPA, (202) 564-7873/4355  
Dee Ann Miller, DEP, (850) 245-2112 or (850) 519-

## **EPA AND FLORIDA DEP WORK TOGETHER TO RESTORE FLORIDA'S SURFACE WATERS**

**WASHINGTON, DC** - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are taking actions to protect and restore both recreational uses and aquatic life in Florida waters. These actions include EPA issuing a formal determination under the Clean Water Act that "numeric" nutrient water quality criteria are necessary in Florida, and Florida accelerating its efforts to adopt numeric nutrient criteria into state regulations. Numeric nutrient criteria will significantly improve Florida's ability to address nutrient pollution in a timely and effective manner.

"EPA recognizes Florida as a national leader in managing nutrient pollution but more needs to be done," said Benjamin H. Grumbles, EPA's assistant administrator for water. "Therefore, we are taking the significant step today of requiring numeric nutrient standards for water quality. We look forward to working closely with the State to develop improved standards that will accelerate the protection and restoration of Florida's waters."

"The State of Florida recognizes that more needs to be done to address nutrient pollution in our rivers, streams, lakes and estuaries, and these actions will help our State and all of our stakeholders prevent and better manage sources of nitrogen and phosphorus from entering our waters," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole.

Excess nitrogen and phosphorus levels (nutrient pollution) in waterbodies can cause harm to aquatic ecosystems and threaten public health. Nutrient pollution can lead to water quality problems such as harmful algal blooms, low-oxygen "dead zones" in water bodies and declines in wildlife and wildlife habitat. These effects also disrupt recreational activities and pose threats to public health.

Water quality degradation from nutrient pollution is a significant environmental issue in Florida. Florida's 2008 Integrated Water Quality Assessment revealed that approximately 1,000 miles of rivers and streams, 350,000 acres of lakes, and 900 square miles of estuaries are impaired by nutrients. The actual number of miles and acres of waters impaired for nutrients is likely higher, as many waters that have yet to be assessed may also be impaired.

Local governments in Florida have worked to improve wastewater treatment and stormwater management. In addition, many in the agricultural community have implemented best management practices for nutrient control. It takes focused attention by all stakeholders in each watershed to address this challenging issue.

The federal determination is intended to build upon the substantial investments that Florida has made to date in nutrient data collection, analysis, and stakeholder involvement, and is fully consistent with the state and EPA's commitment to a stronger nutrient control program. The new numeric nutrient water quality standards will help Florida improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its water quality management tools, identify waters impaired because of nutrient pollution, establish total maximum daily loads and Basin Management Action Plans and derive National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit limits.

EPA's decision letter on these actions:

<http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/standards/rules/#det>

DEP's 2008 Integrated Report:

[http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/docs/2008\\_Integrated\\_Report.pdf](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/docs/2008_Integrated_Report.pdf)

DEP's Numeric Nutrient Criteria Development Plan:

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wqssp/nutrients>