Strategic Monitoring Plans

To achieve the data sufficiency requirements necessary for basin assessments, the Watershed Assessment Section develops Strategic Monitoring Plans (SMPs) each fall prior to the year of sampling. By prioritizing monitoring efforts in specific basins, the department can contribute to ongoing sampling efforts and focus on collecting data where there may be shortfalls. Sampling is carried out by the seven Regional Operation Centers (ROCs) located throughout the state and by staff in Tallahassee. This extensive monitoring effort is accomplished through coordination with water management districts, city and county governments, and other organizations. The current SMPs for each region of the state can be found at: https://floridadep.gov/dear/watershed-assessment-section/content/strategic-monitoring-plans.

The IWR Database

The Impaired Waters Rule (IWR) Database, used by the Watershed Assessment Section to assess waterbodies, incorporates data from a number of sources including the Florida STORage and RETrieval (STORET) database, the Watershed Information Network (WIN), the DEP Biological Database (SBIO), the Florida Dept. of Health, the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the U.S. Geological Survey. The IWR Database is available to the public for download as a Microsoft Access database that is updated 2-3 times per year to include the most recent data. It can be used to access "report cards" that summarize waterbody information and preliminary assessments, as well as raw data used in those assessments. The link to download the IWR Database is: http://publicfiles.dep.state.fl.us/dear/IWR/.

Submitting Data

The Watershed Information Network (WIN), which replaced STORET, is the primary source of water quality data incorporated into the IWR database. External entities who would like to submit applicable water quality data should contact their regional WIN coordinator, found at: https://publicfiles.dep.state.fl.us/DEAR/WIN/WIN_Contacts.pdf. Biological data can be submitted by downloading and completing the Bioassessment Data Template available on the Watershed Assessment Section homepage (link below). The completed template, along with any supporting documentation, can be emailed directly to Kevin O'Donnell (contact information found below).

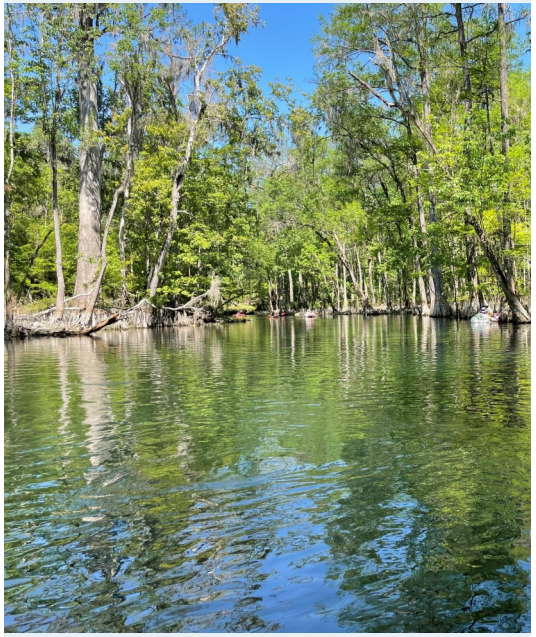
Watershed Assessment Section
2600 Blair Stone Road - Mail Station 3560
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2400
Phone: (850) 245-8469
Email: Kevin.ODonnell@FloridaDEP.gov

Learn more about the Watershed Assessment Section at **https://floridadep.gov/dear/watershed-assessment-section**

11/2021

Watershed Assessment Section

Background, Purpose, and Goals



Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration

What We Do

The core function of the Watershed Assessment Section is to use the best available information to identify waterbodies that are not meeting the applicable water quality standards for their designated uses based on the Impaired Waters Rule (IWR) and the Surface Water Quality Standards Rule (Chapters 62-303 and 62-302, Florida Administrative Code). These standards are established to protect public health, preserve aquatic habitat and wildlife, and ensure safe and healthy fishing and recreational uses. Surface waters that do not meet the applicable water quality standards for any given parameter are determined to be impaired and are added to Florida's Verified List of Impaired Waters. Verified impaired waterbodies require the development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), which establishes the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive without causing exceedances of water quality standards. TMDLs are then implemented through restoration plans, such as Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs). BMAPs describe strategies for restoring impaired waters by reducing pollutant loadings to meet the allowable loadings established in a TMDL.

Water quality limited waterbodies are submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as additions to Florida's 303(d) List, as required by the Clean Water Act. Waterbodies that demonstrate improved water quality or that have had TMDLs developed are placed on the Delist List and are removed from Florida's Verified List of Impaired Waters and Florida's 303(d) List.

What is the Impaired Waters Assessment Listing Process?

What are Designated Uses?

Water quality standard classifications are arranged in order of the degree of protection required. Class I generally has the most stringent water quality criteria, while Class V typically has the least.

Waterbody Class	Designated Use
Class I	Potable Water Supplies
Class II	Shellfish Propagation or Harvesting
Class III	Fish Consumption, Recreation, and Propagation and Maintenance of a Healthy, Well-Balanced Population of Fish and Wildlife
Class III Limited	Fish Consumption, Recreation or Limited Recreation, and/or Propagation and Maintenance of a Limited Population of Fish and Wildlife
Class IV	Agricultural Water Supplies
Class V	Navigation, Utility, and Industrial Use

Assessment Categories

During the IWR evaluation, individual parameters are placed into one of five main categories used to describe the waterbody's current status. Parameters placed in Category 5 are listed as Impaired and are added to the Verified List of Impaired Waters for TMDL and, potentially, BMAP development.

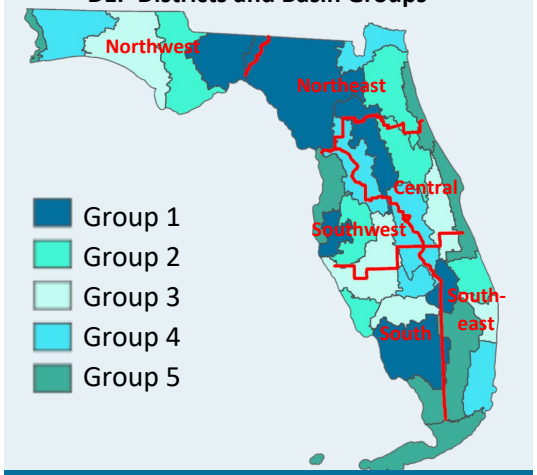
Category	Description
1	Not impaired (attains ALL uses)
2, 2b, 2e, 2t	Meets standards/not impaired (2), and has a Reasonable Assurance Plan (2b), Alternative Restoration Plan (2e), or TMDL (2t)
3a, 3b, 3c	No data (3a), Insufficient Data (3b), or Potentially Impaired but Insufficient Data (3c)
4a, 4b, 4c, 4d*, 4e*	Does not meet standards but TMDL not needed; TMDL already exists (4a), Reasonable Assurance Plan (4b), Natural Conditions (4c), no causative pollutant (4d), or Ongoing Restoration (4e)
5*	Does not meet standards, TMDL required

*Added to the Florida 303(d) List

Assessment Frequency & Districts

In 2021, the department implemented a major change to its approach for assessing waters under the Impaired Waters Rule (Chapter 62-303, Florida Administrative Code). A process called the **Biennial Assessment** was developed in order to increase the frequency at which waterbodies are assessed. Rather than assessing individual basin groups in a five-year cycle (the previous method), the department now assesses all waterbodies in the State over the course of a two-year cycle. This increased frequency of assessment provides a more up-to-date picture of Florida's water quality conditions and, as a result, more timely and effective implementation of restoration efforts.

Biennial Assessment Schedule

Assessment Year (Cycle)	Planning Period	Verified Period
2020 (End of Five-Year Cycle)	1/1/2007 - 12/31/2016	1/1/2012 - 6/30/2019
2022 (First Biennial Assessment	1/1/2008 - 12/31/2017	1/1/2013 - 6/30/2020
2024	1/1/2010 - 12/31/2019	1/1/2015 - 6/30/2022
2026	1/1/2012 - 12/31/2021	1/1/2017 - 6/30/2024
2028	1/1/2014 - 12/31/2023	1/1/2019 - 6/30/2026
2030	1/1/2016 - 12/31/2025	1/1/2021 - 6/30/2028

DEP Districts and Basin Groups