

About the Division of Water Quality

The primary responsibility of the division is safeguarding water quality.

This DOES include:

- Protecting groundwater, streams, rivers, wetlands and lakes.
- Permitting wastewater discharges
- Enforcing Clean Water Act regulations
- Investigating spills and providing technical assistance on remediation

This DOES NOT include:

- Regulating private wells
- Requiring or issuing permits for every activity that impacts waters of the state

Fish and macroinvertebrate populations are assessed to help determine the water quality of a river.



Watershed Management Program

The Watershed Management Program is primarily responsible for monitoring and assessing water quality in streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands across North Dakota. This is done in cooperation with many local, state and federal partners. The program's 10 members address water quality concerns by developing Total Maximum Daily Loads, maintaining an ambient monitoring network, conducting lake water quality assessments, conducting biological monitoring and providing technical assistance for watershed projects. Additionally, staff members implement initiatives such as the Nutrient Reduction Strategy, the Basin Water Quality Management Framework and information/education programs.

Groundwater Protection Program

The Groundwater Protection Program protects and monitors groundwater quality and works towards restoration of groundwater that has been impacted by contaminants. The seven-member staff administers the following subprograms: Source Water Protection, Underground Injection Control, and the Western Ambient and Agricultural Ambient Groundwater Monitoring. The program has continuously monitored groundwater across the state since 1992.

NDPDES Discharge Permits Program

The North Dakota Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NDPDES) Program, commonly called the Permits Program, was developed in response to the legislation of the 1972 Clean Water Act (CWA). The program's 12 members administer municipal/industrial wastewater, stormwater, pretreatment, concentrated animal feeding operations and septic pumper regulations.

Spill Investigation Program

The Spill Response Program was first started in 2015 to more actively document and monitor oilfield and general contamination incidents of soil and water. Currently, the program's six members address a variety of issues such as waste management, groundwater and surface water protection, and public relations. Program members work in a variety of divisions including Water Quality, Waste Management and Air Quality.

Special Projects Program

Special projects are diverse in scope. They entail the development of water quality standards that protect the beneficial uses of water in North Dakota. Water quality certification ensures that federally permitted activities comply with water quality standards. Some major issues such as the Devils Lake outlet, Missouri River management and others require a multi-disciplinary approach to achieve solutions. Participation of the Special Projects Program in this process is essential for protection of water quality and enhancement of aquatic ecological health.

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