Water Quality Programs

Mission Statement

The mission of the Water Quality Division is to protect and enhance public health and the environment by ensuring safe drinking water and reducing the impact of pollutants discharged to surface and groundwater.

Our core responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that Arizona's public water systems deliver safe drinking water.
- Managing the quality of water resources through partnerships within the natural boundaries of the state's watersheds.
- Regulating the discharge and treatment of wastewater.
- Monitoring and assessing the quality of surface and groundwater throughout the state.
- Identifying water pollution problems and establishing standards to address them.
- Issuing permits to protect Arizona waters from point sources of pollution.
- Investigating complaints and violations of Arizona's water quality laws, rules and permits.

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WATER QUALITY DIVISION

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Safe Drinking Water

Under the *Safe Drinking Water Act*, protection of drinking water quality starts with an assessment of the quality of the drinking water source and continues through regulations that govern water system design and construction. Drinking water quality is assured further through scheduled tests required of all public water systems for a wide variety of potential contaminants. The results of these tests are reported to the Water Quality Division and a summary of test results are delivered to the customers once a year. As a result of these regulations and continued testing, drinking water supplies in the United States are among the cleanest and safest in the world and Arizona is no exception.

Groundwater Protection

ADEQ issues *Aquifer Protection Permits* (APP) to safeguard Arizona's groundwater. This program controls discharges of polutants from sewerage treatment facilities, mining operations and other industrial facilities, septic tanks and regulates the direct reuse of reclaimed water.

APPs establish specific discharge limits, monitoring and reporting requirements and may also require facilities to undertake special measures to protect human health and the environment from harmful pollutants.

ADEQ's *Pesticide Contamination Prevention Program* prevents groundwater contamination from routine agricultural pesticide use. The program regulates agricultural use pesticides and includes the creation of the Groundwater Protection List of pesticides with the potential to reach and impact groundwater. The program publishes an annual report of the use of these listed pesticides through the state.

Surface Water Protection

The Water Quality Division implements a number of *Clean Water Act* (CWA) programs including: developing surface water quality standards to protect human health and the environment; monitoring the water quality of streams and lakes throughout the state; assessing whether surface waters are meeting water quality standards; and if standards are not being met, developing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan with a goal to reduce pollutants and restore water quality. Once the TMDL is adopted, ADEQ works closely with the public and private interests in the watershed to improve water quality.

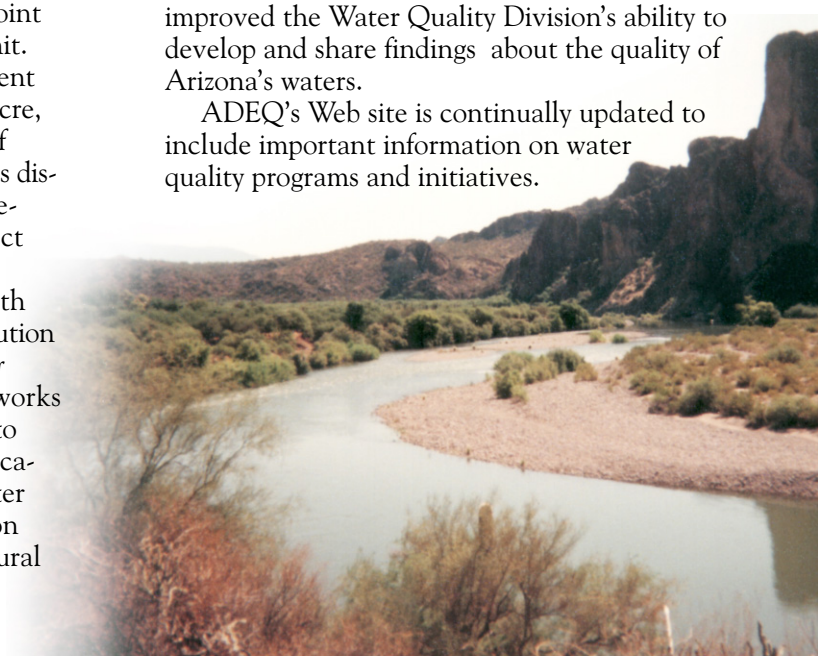
The Water Quality Division implements the *Arizona Pollutant Discharge Elimination System* (AZPDES) program. This permit program requires all facilities that discharge pollutants from a point source into streams and lakes to obtain a permit. Regulated discharges include sewerage treatment facilities, construction sites greater than one acre, municipal stormwater systems, and a variety of industrial facilities. An AZPDES permit includes discharge limits, monitoring and reporting requirements and other conditions necessary to protect human health and the environment.

Section 319 of the CWA provides states with funds to aid in addressing nonpoint source pollution problems. The Water Quality Division's *Water Quality Improvement Grant (WQIG) Program* works with local government, citizens and industry to develop and fund restoration projects and educational opportunities to protect and restore water quality that is threatened by nonpoint pollution sources, such as channelization, some agricultural practices and septic systems.

Compliance

The WQD Compliance Section provides compliance assistance to the regulated community, collects and analyzes data and inspects drinking water, wastewater and stormwater facilities. The program also handles compliant investigations, enforcement actions and initiatives to ensure safe drinking water and proper discharge, disposal and reuse of wastewater according to federal and state rules and regulations.

Outreach and Community Involvement

The WQD's outreach efforts provide the public with opportunities for involvement in important issues that affect local communities and state resources. Activities include conducting hearings, workshops and other public events to discuss permits, new rule proposals, or when seeking the public's input on new programs, water quality initiatives or studies. Information technology advances have significantly improved the Water Quality Division's ability to develop and share findings about the quality of Arizona's waters.

ADEQ's Web site is continually updated to include important information on water quality programs and initiatives.