

## Water Classifications and Reclassification

All waters in New York State are assigned a letter classification that denotes their best uses. Letter classes such as A, B, C, and D are assigned to fresh surface waters, and SA, SB, SC, I, and SD to saline (marine) surface waters. Best uses include: source of drinking water, swimming, boating, fishing, and shellfishing. The letter classifications and their best uses are described in regulation [6 NYCRR Part 701](#). (link leaves DEC's website) The classification of individual bodies of surface water is in regulation [6 NYCRR Chapter X](#) (Parts 800 - 941).

Surface waters of the State are reclassified through the formal rule making process. Requests for reclassification can be made by submitting a completed [Water Reclassification Request Form \(PDF, 1.86 MB\)](#) to the Department at the address on the form or by using the "E-Mail Form" button at the top of the form.

The best use of Class GA groundwater (all fresh groundwater in New York State is Class GA) and Class A, A-Special, AA, and AA-Special surface waters is a source of potable water supply. Standards and guidance values of the Health (Water Source) Type are established for these waters to protect this use. Separate standards for drinking water are promulgated by the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH).

Certain waters of the Lake Champlain and St. Lawrence River drainage basins are currently under consideration for [reclassification](#).

## Antidegradation

New York has a statewide antidegradation policy as set forth in the September 9, 1985 [Organization and Delegation Memorandum Number 85-40](#). For the Great Lakes System, this statewide policy is supplemented by implementation guidance in [TOGS 1.3.9 \(PDF, 254 KB\)](#)

## Other Resources

Standards and guidance values of other Types, including Health (Fish Consumption), Aquatic (Chronic), Aquatic (Acute), Wildlife, and Aesthetic are also established. Further information is provided in the Introduction to [TOGS 1.1.1 \(PDF, 517 KB\)](#)

Water quality standards and standard-setting procedures are in [6 NYCRR Chapter X](#), Parts 700-706.

Several Technical and Operational Guidance Series (TOGS) are relevant to water quality standards:

- [TOGS 1.1.3 \(PDF, 12 KB\)](#) - Procedures for derivation site-specific standards and guidance values for protection of aquatic life.
- [TOGS 1.1.4 \(PDF, 55 KB\)](#) - Procedures for derivation of bioaccumulation factors.
- [TOGS 1.1.5 \(PDF, 128 KB\)](#) - Procedures for deriving ambient water quality standards and guidance values for the protection of wildlife.

- [TOGS 1.1.6 \(PDF, 337 KB\)](#)- Interpretation Guidance for Marine Dissolved Oxygen (DO) Standard.

## **More about Water Quality Standards and Classifications:**

- [Reclassification of St. Lawrence River Drainage Basin](#) - Certain waters of the St. Lawrence River drainage basin will be undergoing reclassification.
- [Nutrient Criteria](#) - Nutrient criteria are being updated to better protect potable water, recreational and aquatic life use in lakes, rivers and estuaries
- [Tables of Milestones for Nutrient Criteria](#) - Tables of Milestones for Nutrient Criteria Revised August, 2012
- [2008 Amendments to Water Quality Standards Regulations \(6 NYCRR Parts 700 - 704\)](#) - Final Amendments to Water Quality Standards Regulations (6 NYCRR Parts 700 - 704)