

Regulatory Review Council Approves ADEQ Standards to Protect Arizona Waters from Pollution

PHOENIX (Dec. 3, 2008) - Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Director Steve Owens announced today that the Governor's Regulatory Review Council (GRRC) has approved standards developed by ADEQ to protect surface water quality throughout the state. GRRC is the state body required to review regulations of state agencies before they can become law.

"These standards are long overdue and are absolutely essential to protect Arizona's precious water resources," said Director Owens. "The people of this state deserve clean water in our rivers, lakes and streams."

Among other protections, the standards designate two water bodies as Outstanding Arizona Waters. They are Fossil Creek, a major tributary of the Verde River and the boundary between Gila and Yavapai counties, and Davidson Canyon, a tributary of Cienega Creek in Pima County.

"The designations allow ADEQ to protect the water quality of these creeks, and give them the highest level of protection from pollution and degradation of their outstanding water quality," Director Owens said.

The new standards also protect lakes and reservoirs from being choked by weeds and algae. They also ensure the biological integrity of perennial streams and protect them from excessive sedimentation, which can limit or kill fish and other aquatic life.

In addition, the standards add prohibitions against discharges to the Vekol and Smith washes upstream of the Ak Chin Indian Community near the city of Maricopa in Pinal County. The prohibitions recognize the value of these washes, which are of great significance to the Ak Chin.

ADEQ issues the standards under the federal Clean Water Act, which requires the approval of the Environmental Protection Agency and requires states to review the standards every three years. The new standards become effective in February 2009.

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