

# NPDES PROGRAM AND PERMIT QUALITY REVIEWS

PLANNING FOR FY<sub>24</sub>-28 CYCLE

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FEBRUARY 2023

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# What is a PQR?

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- Review of NPDES Program implementation on 5-year cycle
  - EPA Regions review state-issued permits
  - EPA HQ reviews Region-issued permits
- Systematic, standardized review of final permits
  - Comparison to NPDES regulations and CWA requirements
  - Uses national checklist and other review/discussion tools
- Region/State discussions
- PQR report
  - Reports published on NPDES website:  
<https://www.epa.gov/npdes/npdes-program-management-and-oversight>
  - Trackable action items

# Value of PQRs

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1. Standardized national oversight mechanism - complement to real-time review of draft permits
2. Routine reviews identify opportunities for continuous improvement
3. PQRs foster understanding of program highlights and challenges
4. Transparency, accountability

# Goals for Next PQR Cycle (FY2024-FY2028)

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1. Reduce time & workload for report development and review
  - Shorter report – quicker review
  - Same overall process
    - Desktop review of permit files
    - Meetings/interviews with state – before, during, after desktop review
    - Review of draft report by HQ, Region, State
2. Focus on program updates and delivery of review findings
  - Less focus on state program background
  - Focus on PQR findings, including action items

# What's Changing

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1. Streamline report
  - Remove some background info on state program and processes
  - Move national program background (e.g., descriptions of NPDES regulatory requirements) to a single new PQR reference document
2. Streamline advance questionnaire, opening interview
3. Replace national topics with regional topic(s)
4. Highlight non-regulatory but high-profile initiatives: EJ, Climate, PFAS
5. Better information-sharing for PQR records, action items

# Next Steps

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HQ and Regional workgroup drafting, reviewing tools

*Winter/Spring 2023*

High-level review/reaction by EPA managers, ACWA

*Late June 2023*

Finalize tools, launch 2024-2028 cycle

*October 2023*