

Pollution Control Board Considers Rulemaking To Set E-coli Bacteria Standards for Lake Michigan Beaches and the Mississippi River

The Illinois Pollution Control Board, on December 16, 2004, accepted for hearing a proposal to set Escherichia coli (E-coli) bacterial water quality standards for Lake Michigan beaches and portions of the Mississippi River. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) filed this rulemaking, Proposed Amendments to 35 Ill. Adm. Code 302 and 303, R05-10, on November 8, 2004.

The IEPA asserts the proposed changes to the Lake Michigan standards are needed to comply with Section 303(i) of the Clean Water Act. The IEPA proposes three primary changes to the Lake Michigan Basin bacteria water quality standards. First, a definition will be provided for “designated bathing beach waters.” Second, the rule would only apply from May through October since bacterial limits are intended to protect humans during whole body contact activities that occur only during the warmer months. And, third, the rule would establish a geometric mean and single sample maximum for E-coli standards.

The IEPA is also proposing bacterial water quality standards for Illinois’ portion of the Mississippi River. The IEPA asserts that this proposed change is a result of an agreement by the United States Environmental Protection Agency with the Sierra Club that seeks to have all states on the upper Mississippi River adopt E-coli standards.

The Board directed the hearing officer to schedule public hearings as expeditiously as possible. Copies of Board opinions, proposed rules, and hearing officer orders may be viewed and public hearings will be scheduled in this rulemaking. Written comments should contain the rulemaking title and docket number (R05-10) and should be sent to the Clerk’s Office at the following address:

Dorothy Gunn, Clerk
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James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
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For more information, please contact John Knittle at (217)-278-3109 or knittlej@ipcb.state.il.us.