



Elkins Citywide Hydrant Flushing

DEP Reviews Water Quality Standards at Public Meeting

Written by *Renata Di Gregorio*
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Water quality is a big topic on the table, especially after the chemical spill last year in our southern counties. On Tuesday our Department of Environmental Protection looked at some suggested changes and how they could impact your drinking water. They reviewed our water quality standards at a public meeting in Charleston.

A big part of what was discussed at the DEP's Triennial Review was Category A. It's the water supply standard our state applies to all water so that it's available to be used as the public water supply if needed.

The question with this is if Category A should be applied to water that isn't a usual public water supply source.

"Eighteen commenters submitted several comments and many of those were in relation to the application of the Category A standard in our waters in West Virginia," said Laura Cooper, the Assistant Director of the Division of Water and Waste Management for Water Quality Standards. "Some of them are requesting that we have a conductivity standard, some specific permittees have asked for changes in the way that the water quality standards work so that they can be more accurate or better reflect the current science."

On one hand, an environmental consultant from Monongalia County says we have to look toward the future and if the standards only apply to some bodies of water, overall pollution will increase. He says primary and secondary water intakes are often mixed, so it's important to make sure everything is uncontaminated.

"Utilities across the state are looking into options for secondary intakes so that they could provide water if their primary source of water becomes contaminated," explained Evan Hansen, President of Downstream Strategies. "And it's important to make sure not just the primary intakes are clean."

On the other hand, some environmental attorneys and company representatives say if a certain body of water isn't going to be used in the public water supply, Category A shouldn't apply. They say companies shouldn't have to go to the trouble and expense of keeping up the water quality standards for water that people won't be drinking. These people didn't want to go on camera, but explained this at the public meeting.



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This meeting was required by the Clean Water Act and the issues are being considered and researched before a revised water quality standard rule is put together for the 2017 legislative session.

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