



“Category A”

The Water Quality Standard to protect current and future drinking water use

Support DEP’s rule (SB167/HB2289) restore Category A (drinking water) status to the Kanawha River.

Reject attempts to weaken Category A protections statewide.

BACKGROUND

Water Quality Standards are the legal basis for controlling the amount of pollution entering our waters. They are designed to protect and maintain water quality so that we can safely use it for drinking, recreation, and other uses. Those uses are protected through categorical determination.

Category A is the human health use category that is applied to waters that, after conventional treatment, are used for human consumption. It protects our waters so that they can be safely used as current and future drinking water sources. Its criteria protect us from pollutants that are most harmful to human health, such as known and suspected carcinogens. Since 1967, West Virginia’s Water Quality Standards have applied an equivalent Category A protection to all waters, with just a few exceptions.

Currently, about 31,000 miles of West Virginia streams enjoy this protection. But in the early 1980s the Category A designation for the stretch of the Kanawha River from Belle downstream was removed, and the Kanawha was no longer classified to be suitable for drinking water use.

CURRENT ISSUE

The WVDEP filed a rule to restore Category A protections for the Kanawha River. This would allow WV American Water the option of placing a secondary intake on the Kanawha. The rule has been introduced as S.B.167/H.B.2289.

Some industry groups oppose the state’s long-standing policy of protecting most waters for current and future drinking water use. They propose not only to reject making the Kanawha available for drinking water use, but also to limit Category A protections for all streams to 500 yards above existing drinking water intakes. *This would be the most drastic weakening of statewide drinking water protections since WV established its Water Quality Standards in the 1960’s.*

IMPLICATIONS OF REMOVING CATEGORY A PROTECTIONS

- Pollution will increase in nearly all of our rivers and streams, with pollutants that are most harmful to human health increasing the most.
- Potential future use of waters as drinking water sources is ignored. Our options for finding water suitable for future drinking use will be severely limited.
- More polluted water poses increased costs and concerns for businesses and citizens who live in or might locate to West Virginia.