# Frequently Asked Questions About TMDLs

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| **What is a TMDL?** | A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is a scientific determination of the maximum amount of a given pollutant that a surface water can absorb and still meet the water quality standards that protect human health and aquatic life. Water bodies that do not meet water quality standards are identified as "impaired" for the particular pollutants of concern--nutrients, bacteria, mercury, etc.--and TMDLs must be developed, adopted and implemented for those pollutants to reduce pollutants and clean up the water body.<br><br>The threshold limits on pollutants in surface waters--Florida's surface water quality standards on which TMDLs are based--are set forth primarily in rule 62-302, Florida Administrative Code, and the associated table of water quality criteria.<br><br>**TMDLs** must be developed, adopted, and implemented for those pollutants identified to be exceeding water quality standards as to reduce pollutants and clean up the specific water body. TMDLs address specific waterbody segments. |
| **What is a TMDL Document?** | The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Watershed Assessment Section (WAS) provides monitoring and assessment of waterbodies and a **TMDL Document** is a synthesis of these activities. This document summarizes the status of a waterbody with respect to a specific impairment. The **TMDL Document** may **contain** a single or multiple **TMDL Records** (based on WBID + Parameter combinations) or multiple WBIDs affected by the same parameter. |
| **What is a TMDL Record?** | A **TMDL Record** is a unique combination of: 1) Impaired WBID that is affected by a, 2) Parameter/ Pollutant, at a 3) certain Allocation (or amount). The TMDL prescribes the limit of how much (the Load Allocation) a particular parameter/ pollutant can be present in a specific Waterbody Segment and the water meet state water quality standards. |
| **What is a WBID?** | The **Waterbody Segment** refers to a specific portion of a waterbody.<br>The **Waterbody ID** (**WBID**) is designated by a unique numeric identifier. This provides for more precise scale for monitoring and analysis activities. |
| **Pollutant** | A **Pollutant** is defined as any substance, such as a chemical or waste product introduced into the environment that adversely affects the usefulness of a resource. |
| **Parameter Group** | A **Parameter Group** is a collection of related pollutants, substances, water quality characteristics or measures; these include field measurements/observations, biological measures, metals, nutrients, and pesticides. |
| **Do all water bodies have TMDLs?** | No, only waters that are assessed as Verified Impaired have TMDLs. |
| **What does it mean when a water body is impaired?** | Impaired means that the waterbody does not meet some portion(s) of the water quality criteria established by the Florida Administrative Code, section 62-302. In general, a water body is deemed to be impaired if it does not meet its “designated use”. Water bodies are grouped into “classes” depending on their designated uses. For example, water bodies that are used for drinking water, for shellfish aquaculture, fishing/swimming, and industrial purposes would all be in different classes with different designated uses, and therefore have different standards of water quality applied to them by regulators. |
| **Causative Pollutant** | The cause of impairment is called the **Causative Pollutant**. This specific pollutant is the substance that is given a limit in the TMDL Document. |

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| **Load Allocations** | The portions of a receiving water's loading capacity that are allocated to one of its existing or future nonpoint sources of pollution. Loads may apply to a specific WBID or they may be distributed among several WBIDs. An “aggregated allocation”n is one that is not attributed to a single source. |
| **Wasteload Allocations (WLAs)** | Pollutant loads allotted to existing and future point sources such as discharges from industry and sewage facilities. Load Allocations (measurable amounts) may originate from Stormwater, Wastewater, or Surface Water sources. |
| **What is a Watershed?** | A watershed is the geographic area through which water flows across the land and drains into a common body of water, whether a stream, river, lake, or ocean. Much of the water comes from rainfall and the stormwater runoff. The quality and quantity of stormwater is affected by all the alterations to the land--agriculture, roadways, urban development, and the activities of people within a watershed. Watersheds are usually separated from other watersheds by naturally elevated areas. Water bodies may belong to multiple watersheds. |

Adapted from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection TMDL Tracker User Help,
http://webapps.dep.state.fl.us/DearTmdl/help/jsp/UH_FAQ.jsp