



AN ACT REVISING THE BOARD OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS FOR ADOPTING WATER QUALITY REGULATIONS MORE STRINGENT THAN FEDERAL REGULATIONS; REVISING IMPLEMENTATION OF WATER QUALITY STANDARDS THAT ARE PURER THAN A NATURAL CONDITION OF A WATERCOURSE OR WATER SOURCE; REVISING THE PROCESS FOR RECLASSIFYING WATER QUALITY STANDARDS; REVISING THE PROCESS FOR ADOPTING SITE-SPECIFIC WATER QUALITY STANDARDS; PROVIDING A DEFINITION; AMENDING SECTION 75-5-203, MCA; AND REPEALING SECTION 75-5-309, MCA.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. State regulation for natural conditions. (1) The department may not apply a standard to a water body for water quality that is more stringent than the nonanthropogenic condition of the water body. For the parameters for which the applicable standards are more stringent than the nonanthropogenic condition, the standard is the nonanthropogenic condition of the parameter in the water body. The department shall implement the standard in a manner that provides for the water quality standards for downstream waters to be attained and maintained.

(2) (a) For water bodies where the standard is more stringent than the condition of the water body but subsection (1) is not applicable, the board shall adopt rules consistent with comparable federal rules and guidelines providing criteria and procedures for the department to issue variances from standards if:

(i) the condition cannot reasonably be expected to be remediated during the permit term for which the application for variance has been received; and

(ii) the discharge to which the variance applies would not materially contribute to the condition.

(b) A variance issued pursuant to subsection (2)(a) must be reviewed every 5 years and may be modified or terminated as a result of the review.

Section 2. Section 75-5-203, MCA, is amended to read:

"75-5-203. State regulations no more stringent than federal regulations or guidelines. (1) ~~After April 14, 1995, except~~ Except as provided in subsections (2) through (5) or unless required by state law, the board may not adopt a rule to implement ~~this chapter~~ 75-5-301, 75-5-302, 75-5-303, or 75-5-310 that is more stringent than the comparable federal regulations or guidelines that address the same circumstances. The board may incorporate by reference comparable federal regulations or guidelines.

(2) The board may adopt a rule to implement this chapter that is more stringent than comparable federal regulations or guidelines only if the board makes a written finding after a public hearing and public comment and based on evidence in the record that:

(a) the proposed state standard or requirement protects public health or the environment of the state; and

(b) the state standard or requirement to be imposed ~~can~~ can mitigate harm to the public health or environment and is achievable under current technology.

(3) The written finding must reference ~~information and~~ pertinent, ascertainable, and peer-reviewed scientific studies contained in the record that forms the basis for the board's conclusion. The written finding must also include information from the hearing record regarding the costs to the regulated community that are directly attributable to the proposed state standard or requirement.

(4) (a) A person affected by a rule of the board ~~adopted after January 1, 1990, and before April 14, 1995,~~ that that person believes to be more stringent than comparable federal regulations or guidelines may petition the board to review the rule. If the board determines that the rule is more stringent than comparable federal regulations or guidelines, the board shall comply with this section by either revising the rule to conform to the federal regulations or guidelines or by making the written finding, as provided under subsection (2), within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed ~~42~~ 8 months after receiving the petition. A petition under this section does not relieve the petitioner of the duty to comply with the challenged rule. The board may charge a petition filing fee in an amount not to exceed \$250.

(b) A person may also petition the board for a rule review under subsection (4)(a) if the board adopts a rule ~~after January 1, 1990,~~ in an area in which no federal regulations or guidelines existed and the federal government subsequently establishes comparable regulations or guidelines that are less stringent than the previously adopted board rule.

(5) This section does not apply to a rule adopted under the emergency rulemaking provisions of

2-4-303(1)."

Section 3. Repealer. The following section of the Montana Code Annotated is repealed:

75-5-309. Standards more stringent than federal standards.

Section 4. Codification instruction. [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 75, chapter 5, and the provisions of Title 75, chapter 5, apply to [section 1].

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
SB 0325, originated in the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2015.

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2015.

SENATE BILL NO. 325
INTRODUCED BY J. KEANE

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