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pursuant to the requirements of section 401 in any case where a State or interstate agency has no authority for issuing such certifications.

[48 FR 51405, Nov. 8, 1983, as amended at 56 FR 64894, Dec. 12, 1991; 60 FR 15387, Mar. 23, 1995]

§ 131.6 Minimum requirements for water quality standards submission.

The following elements must be included in each State's water quality standards submitted to EPA for review:

(a) Use designations consistent with the provisions of sections 101(a)(2) and 303(c)(2) of the Act.

(b) Methods used and analyses conducted to support water quality standards revisions.

(c) Water quality criteria sufficient to protect the designated uses.

(d) An antidegradation policy consistent with § 131.12.

(e) Certification by the State Attorney General or other appropriate legal authority within the State that the water quality standards were duly adopted pursuant to State law.

(f) General information which will aid the Agency in determining the adequacy of the scientific basis of the standards which do not include the uses specified in section 101(a)(2) of the Act as well as information on general policies applicable to State standards which may affect their application and implementation.

§ 131.7 Dispute resolution mechanism.

(a) Where disputes between States and Indian Tribes arise as a result of differing water quality standards on common bodies of water, the lead EPA Regional Administrator, as determined based upon OMB circular A-105, shall be responsible for acting in accordance with the provisions of this section.

(b) The Regional Administrator shall attempt to resolve such disputes where:

(1) The difference in water quality standards results in unreasonable consequences;

(2) The dispute is between a State (as defined in § 131.3(j) but exclusive of all Indian Tribes) and a Tribe which EPA has determined is eligible to the same

extent as a State for purposes of water quality standards;

(3) A reasonable effort to resolve the dispute without EPA involvement has been made;

(4) The requested relief is consistent with the provisions of the Clean Water Act and other relevant law;

(5) The differing State and Tribal water quality standards have been adopted pursuant to State and Tribal law and approved by EPA; and

(6) A valid written request has been submitted by either the Tribe or the State.

(c) Either a State or a Tribe may request EPA to resolve any dispute which satisfies the criteria of paragraph (b) of this section. Written requests for EPA involvement should be submitted to the lead Regional Administrator and must include:

(1) A concise statement of the unreasonable consequences that are alleged to have arisen because of differing water quality standards;

(2) A concise description of the actions which have been taken to resolve the dispute without EPA involvement;

(3) A concise indication of the water quality standards provision which has resulted in the alleged unreasonable consequences;

(4) Factual data to support the alleged unreasonable consequences; and

(5) A statement of the relief sought from the alleged unreasonable consequences.

(d) Where, in the Regional Administrator's judgment, EPA involvement is appropriate based on the factors of paragraph (b) of this section, the Regional Administrator shall, within 30 days, notify the parties in writing that he/she is initiating an EPA dispute resolution action and solicit their written response. The Regional Administrator shall also make reasonable efforts to ensure that other interested individuals or groups have notice of this action. Such efforts shall include but not be limited to the following:

(1) Written notice to responsible Tribal and State Agencies, and other affected Federal agencies,

(2) Notice to the specific individual or entity that is alleging that an unreasonable consequence is resulting

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from differing standards having been adopted on a common body of water,

(3) Public notice in local newspapers, radio, and television, as appropriate,

(4) Publication in trade journal newsletters, and

(5) Other means as appropriate.

(e) If in accordance with applicable State and Tribal law an Indian Tribe and State have entered into an agreement that resolves the dispute or establishes a mechanism for resolving a dispute, EPA shall defer to this agreement where it is consistent with the Clean Water Act and where it has been approved by EPA.

(f) EPA dispute resolution actions shall be consistent with one or a combination of the following options:

(1) *Mediation.* The Regional Administrator may appoint a mediator to mediate the dispute. Mediators shall be EPA employees, employees from other Federal agencies, or other individuals with appropriate qualifications.

(i) Where the State and Tribe agree to participate in the dispute resolution process, mediation with the intent to establish Tribal-State agreements, consistent with Clean Water Act section 518(d), shall normally be pursued as a first effort.

(ii) Mediators shall act as neutral facilitators whose function is to encourage communication and negotiation between all parties to the dispute.

(iii) Mediators may establish advisory panels, to consist in part of representatives from the affected parties, to study the problem and recommend an appropriate solution.

(iv) The procedure and schedule for mediation of individual disputes shall be determined by the mediator in consultation with the parties.

(v) If formal public hearings are held in connection with the actions taken under this paragraph, Agency requirements at 40 CFR 25.5 shall be followed.

(2) *Arbitration.* Where the parties to the dispute agree to participate in the dispute resolution process, the Regional Administrator may appoint an arbitrator or arbitration panel to arbitrate the dispute. Arbitrators and panel members shall be EPA employees, employees from other Federal agencies, or other individuals with appropriate qualifications. The Regional

administrator shall select as arbitrators and arbitration panel members individuals who are agreeable to all parties, are knowledgeable concerning the requirements of the water quality standards program, have a basic understanding of the political and economic interests of Tribes and States involved, and are expected to fulfill the duties fairly and impartially.

(i) The arbitrator or arbitration panel shall conduct one or more private or public meetings with the parties and actively solicit information pertaining to the effects of differing water quality permit requirements on upstream and downstream dischargers, comparative risks to public health and the environment, economic impacts, present and historical water uses, the quality of the waters subject to such standards, and other factors relevant to the dispute, such as whether proposed water quality criteria are more stringent than necessary to support designated uses, more stringent than natural background water quality or whether designated uses are reasonable given natural background water quality.

(ii) Following consideration of relevant factors as defined in paragraph (f)(2)(i) of this section, the arbitrator or arbitration panel shall have the authority and responsibility to provide all parties and the Regional Administrator with a written recommendation for resolution of the dispute. Arbitration panel recommendations shall, in general, be reached by majority vote. However, where the parties agree to binding arbitration, or where required by the Regional Administrator, recommendations of such arbitration panels may be unanimous decisions. Where binding or non-binding arbitration panels cannot reach a unanimous recommendation after a reasonable period of time, the Regional Administrator may direct the panel to issue a non-binding decision by majority vote.

(iii) The arbitrator or arbitration panel members may consult with EPA's Office of General Counsel on legal issues, but otherwise shall have no *ex parte* communications pertaining to the dispute. Federal employees who are arbitrators or arbitration panel members shall be neutral and shall not

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be predisposed for or against the position of any disputing party based on any Federal Trust responsibilities which their employers may have with respect to the Tribe. In addition, arbitrators or arbitration panel members who are Federal employees shall act independently from the normal hierarchy within their agency.

(iv) The parties are not obligated to abide by the arbitrator's or arbitration panel's recommendation unless they voluntarily entered into a binding agreement to do so.

(v) If a party to the dispute believes that the arbitrator or arbitration panel has recommended an action contrary to or inconsistent with the Clean Water Act, the party may appeal the arbitrator's recommendation to the Regional Administrator. The request for appeal must be in writing and must include a description of the statutory basis for altering the arbitrator's recommendation.

(vi) The procedure and schedule for arbitration of individual disputes shall be determined by the arbitrator or arbitration panel in consultation with parties.

(vii) If formal public hearings are held in connection with the actions taken under this paragraph, Agency requirements at 40 CFR 25.5 shall be followed.

(3) *Dispute resolution default procedure.* Where one or more parties (as defined in paragraph (g) of this section) refuse to participate in either the mediation or arbitration dispute resolution processes, the Regional Administrator may appoint a single official or panel to review available information pertaining to the dispute and to issue a written recommendation for resolving the dispute. Review officials shall be EPA employees, employees from other Federal agencies, or other individuals with appropriate qualifications. Review panels shall include appropriate members to be selected by the Regional Administrator in consultation with the participating parties. Recommendations of such review officials or panels shall, to the extent possible given the lack of participation by one or more parties, be reached in a manner identical to that for arbitration of

disputes specified in paragraphs (f)(2)(i) through (f)(2)(vii) of this section.

(g) *Definitions.* For the purposes of this section:

(1) *Dispute Resolution Mechanism* means the EPA mechanism established pursuant to the requirements of Clean Water Act section 518(e) for resolving unreasonable consequences that arise as a result of differing water quality standards that may be set by States and Indian Tribes located on common bodies of water.

(2) *Parties* to a State-Tribal dispute include the State and the Tribe and may, at the discretion of the Regional Administrator, include an NPDES permittee, citizen, citizen group, or other affected entity.

[56 FR 64894, Dec. 12, 1991, as amended at 59 FR 64344, Dec. 14, 1994]

§ 131.8 Requirements for Indian Tribes to administer a water quality standards program.

(a) The Regional Administrator, as determined based on OMB Circular A-105, may accept and approve a tribal application for purposes of administering a water quality standards program if the Tribe meets the following criteria:

(1) The Indian Tribe is recognized by the Secretary of the Interior and meets the definitions in § 131.3 (k) and (l).

(2) The Indian Tribe has a governing body carrying out substantial governmental duties and powers.

(3) The water quality standards program to be administered by the Indian Tribe pertains to the management and protection of water resources which are within the borders of the Indian reservation and held by the Indian Tribe, within the borders of the Indian reservation and held by the United States in trust for Indians, within the borders of the Indian reservation and held by a member of the Indian Tribe if such property interest is subject to a trust restriction on alienation, or otherwise within the borders of the Indian reservation, and

(4) The Indian Tribe is reasonably expected to be capable, in the Regional Administrator's judgment, of carrying out the functions of an effective water quality standards program in a manner