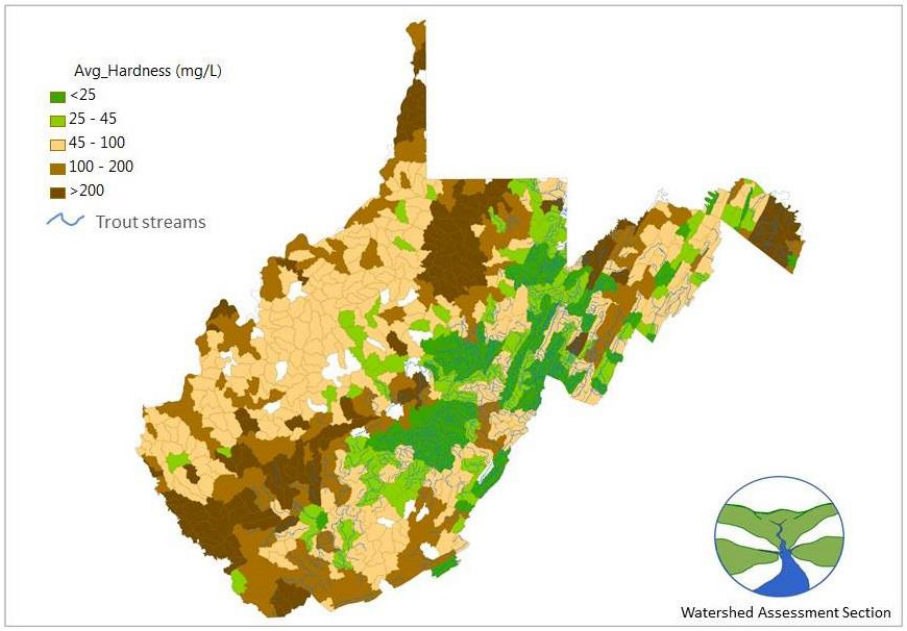
State Water Quality Standards

Reject Revisions to the Aluminum and Selenium Standards

ALUMINUM

Proposed hardness-based criteria will allow 5-40 times more aluminum in the light to dark brown shaded watersheds.



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The proposed rule change will drastically weaken the Aluminum criteria. The revisions are drastic and equate to greater than a 12-fold and 40-fold increase over the current criteria for acute and chronic dissolved Aluminum toxicity to aquatic life respectively. It would make West Virginia's standard the most permissive in the nation.

There is not enough scientific data available to support this change. Little is known about the fate and biological effects of Aluminum in West Virginia's aquatic systems. The revision ignores potential impact of non-dissolved forms of Aluminum on aquatic life.

SELENIUM

The proposed revision to the selenium standard presents serious challenges to its implementation and enforcement. The change relies on fish tissue sampling that would prolong determination of violations. Streams with no fish present, including in cases due to pollution from mining or other sources, may never receive the protections needed to restore their fish populations.

Excessive selenium in streams is known to damage human health and aquatic life.

Selenium is already significant problem in the coal mining regions of West Virginia. Weakening the standard will make it hard to hold coal companies accountable for damage they cause. Eventually, the pollution will have to be treated, and the cost is likely to fall on the taxpayers.

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