

**Comment Response Document  
Regarding the Water Quality Analysis of Heavy Metals  
for the Lower North Branch of the Patapsco River, Baltimore, Carroll,  
Howard and Anne Arundel Counties and Baltimore City, Maryland**

### Introduction

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has conducted a public review of the proposed Water Quality Analysis (WQA) of heavy metals for the Lower North Branch of the Patapsco River. The public comment period was open from August 27, 2004 through September 25, 2004. MDE received two set(s) of written comments.

Below is a list of commentors, their affiliation, the date comments were submitted, and the numbered references to the comments submitted. In the pages that follow, comments are summarized and listed with MDE's response.

### List of Commentors

Author	Affiliation	Date	Comment Number
Thomas Henry	US EPA Region 3, Office of Watersheds	Sept. 8, 2004	1
Sherry Krest	US Fish and Wildlife Service	September 15, 2004	2 and 3

1. The commentor states to please identify the source of the values found in Table 3.

**Response:** The source of the values is from Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Biological Stream Survey: *Searchable Online MBSS Database*, last accessed on May 25, 2004 (<http://mddnr.chesapeakebay.net/mbss/search.cfm>). The document has been updated with the above-mentioned reference.

2. The commentor states that although MDE suggests that the Lower North Branch of the Patapsco River is not an impaired waterbody for heavy metals, the commentor recommends that the Patapsco River remain a system of concern citing three reasons: 1) One out of six (16 percent) of the samples exceeded copper water quality standards for both acute and chronic standards; Lead exceeded chronic water quality standards at 16 percent of the sampling locations as well; 2) The Index of Biological Integrity (IBI) for fish and invertebrates is marginal and often falls below the acceptable score 3.0 IBI score; 3) The fish tissue data is between 8 and 12 years old and may not be relevant to current conditions in this waterbody.

**Response:** The State of Maryland understands the need to continue to watch the health of this waterbody. The Lower North Branch of the Patapsco River is listed on Part 5 of the 2004 303(d) List as impaired for biological communities by an unknown cause. Because this waterbody remains on Part 5 of the 303(d) List as a biological impairment, additional data will be collected as part of the TMDL process to determine the source of the impairment and

identify the substance or substances causing the impairment. Water quality will continue to be monitored in conjunction with various Clean Water Act initiatives.

3. The commentor encourages the State to consider the following recommendations:
  - 1) Continue water quality and sediment monitoring for metals and other contaminants;
  - 2) Update the fish tissue concentration database for this system by collecting new fish tissue data;
  - 3) Continue biological monitoring using Maryland Biological Stream Survey methods.

**Response:** As part of its overall water quality monitoring strategy, Maryland continues monitoring activities in waters throughout Maryland. Water quality monitoring is conducted in conjunction with the State, Federal and local initiatives. Routine monitoring projects include fish tissue sampling (conducted on a three year cycle), MBSS monitoring (which occurs on a rotating random sampling schedule), intensive monitoring, data collection for TMDL Development, CORE water quality monitoring, and the NPDES oversight.