

# **Temperature Criteria Methodology**

## **Policy Statement 06-1**

**Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment  
Water Quality Control Commission  
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## I. INTRODUCTION

This policy addresses the Water Quality Control Commission's methodology and rationale for developing water temperature criteria and standards for the protection of aquatic life in Colorado's surface waters. Colorado's temperature criteria were revised in January 2007 and in June 2010, and this policy records the incremental progress towards the current criteria. The Commission believes that it is appropriate to adopt this policy statement due to the importance of temperature criteria and the need for guidance on their development. This policy is intended as a general informational guide of the Commission's approach to the adoption of these criteria and standards.

The contents of this document have no regulatory effect, but rather summarize the Commission's thinking. Moreover, this policy is not intended and should not be interpreted to limit any options that may be considered, or adopted by the Commission in future rulemaking proceedings. Therefore, this policy statement can, and will, be modified over time as warranted by future rulemaking proceedings.

## II. BACKGROUND

Water temperature directly governs the metabolic rate of fish and influences their behavior. Water temperature also can have a dramatic influence on the diversity and health of the aquatic community. Fish and macroinvertebrates are cold blooded organisms that have evolved with specific thermal requirements, and changes from the natural patterns or ranges can have deleterious effects on the individuals and the communities. Water temperatures are affected by various factors including solar radiation, ambient air temperature, stream shade, channel morphology, stream flows, ground water inflows, and various anthropogenic activities. The intent of Colorado's temperature standard is to protect aquatic life from adverse warming and cooling caused by anthropogenic activities from both point and nonpoint sources.

The Basic Standards and Methodologies for Surface Waters (Regulation No. 31, 5 CCR 1002-31) provides a framework for implementing water quality standards throughout the State of Colorado. Temperature criteria have been adopted in the Basic Standards. Temperature criteria provide protection for the aquatic community from both lethal and sublethal effects. The narrative temperature criteria also provide protection against abrupt or unseasonal changes in water temperatures, which may lead to thermal shock, a condition that can have lethal effects.

The Colorado temperature standard was first adopted by the Commission in 1978, and remained intact for over 25 years. The Division reviewed historic files from both the Division and Commission to determine the basis of these criteria. The Commission hearing files from that time are scarce and incomplete and no records were found regarding adoption of the temperature criteria. Likewise, the Division's files lacked any background information for the temperature criteria adoption. Thus, there was no clear guidance regarding the intent of the adopted criteria.

To address these issues, several references, including US EPA criteria documents, were reviewed to understand the historical background for Colorado's temperature criteria and to shed light on the scientific basis for their development.

**A. Colorado Temperature Criteria Adopted in the Late 1970s**

<b>Colorado Temperature Standard Adopted in the Late 1970s</b>		
<b>PARAMETER</b>	<b>CLASS 1 COLD WATER BIOTA</b>	<b>CLASS 1 WARM WATER BIOTA</b>
Temperature (°C)	Max 20°C, with 3 °C Increase (5)(G)	Max 30°C, with 3 °C increase (5)(G)
<p>(5) Temperature shall maintain a normal pattern of diurnal and seasonal fluctuations with no abrupt changes and shall have no increase in temperature of a magnitude, rate and duration deemed deleterious to the resident aquatic life. Generally, a maximum 3 degrees Celsius increase over a minimum of a four-hour period, lasting 12 hours maximum is deemed acceptable for discharges fluctuating in volume or temperature. Where temperature increases cannot be maintained within this range using BMP, BATEA and BPWTT control measures, the Division will determine whether the resulting temperature increases preclude an aquatic life classification.</p> <p>(G) Recommendations based on review of all available information by the Committee on Water Quality Standards and Stream Classification.</p>		

The temperature criteria consisted of two parts: 1) the 20 °C and 30 °C “numerics”; and 2) the narrative contained in the footnote, which includes language on the “normal pattern of diurnal and seasonal fluctuations” and reference to the maximum 3 °C increase. Further explanations of the averaging period for criteria evaluation were not provided. For instance, most criteria are for the protection of acute (1-day) or chronic (30-day) exposures. The duration for which the temperature criteria should be assessed was not described in a similar manner.

Historically, the Division generally did not assess whether waterbodies were in attainment with the temperature standard; therefore, the issue of the appropriate averaging period (1-day, 30-day, etc.) had not been critically considered. The Division has issued CDPS permits for many years to dischargers of heated effluent to receiving waterbodies. When developing permit limits, the Division included the appropriate 20 °C and 30 °C values as explicit, not-to-exceed effluent limits in the permits for coldwater and warmwater classified waterbodies, respectively. This past practice was questioned in the year 2000 as to whether it was protective of the 3 °C increase portion of the temperature standard.

**B. What was the problem with the former criteria?**

The three problems with the 1970's version of the criteria were that they were inconsistently applied in permits, Footnote 5 was unclear, and there were disagreements about how the attainment of this standard should be assessed in the context of the 303(d) List.

A workgroup convened in the fall of 2001 to discuss the interpretation of the temperature criteria for the purpose of assessing ambient water quality and its implementation in CDPS permits. Efforts towards understanding the criteria increased in preparation for the 2005 Regulation No. 31 Basic Standards rulemaking hearing. The Division proposed new temperature standards in the June 2005 Basic Standards Rulemaking.

### **C. Commission's Action in June 2005**

The temperature workgroup was far from consensus for the June 2005 Basic Standards Rulemaking. In response, the Commission adopted revised temperature standards with an effective date of December 31, 2007. This delay was provided to enable the Division and stakeholders to continue to work on refining the methodology and the data quality protocols for developing revised temperature criteria.

### **D. Preparation for January 2007 Rulemaking Hearing**

In 2005 and 2006, the Division and stakeholders continued to work on the methodology and data quality protocols through various venues. A Temperature Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed to discuss temperature issues through a series of four technical memos and conference calls. The TAC consisted of six members from a wide range of disciplines: academia, government, dischargers, and environmental consultants. The Division reported back to the stakeholders through monthly temperature stakeholder meetings where stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on the work the TAC was doing.

The TAC addressed the following:

- Identification of metrics useful for assessing fish species tolerance of lethal and long-term effects of temperature (see section VIII.D.)
- Screening criteria and important metadata for creating a database that would contain all known acceptable scientific data on the thermal tolerance and optima for Colorado fish species (see section IX.)
- The appropriate averaging periods for assessing chronic and acute in-stream temperatures (see section VI.)
- The importance of protecting against thermal shock (see section IV.C.2.)
- The importance of protecting spawning (see section IV.C.1.)
- The importance of protecting early life stages (see section IV.C.1.)
- The importance of protecting normal diel and seasonal variation (see section IV.C.3.)
- The importance of protecting normal patterns of spatial variability (see section IV.C.3.)

Following the TAC's recommendations, the WQCD and stakeholders identified the appropriate fish species, metrics, and specific studies (see section IX.) that were used for criteria development. The result was the Colorado Temperature Database v3.1 (see section X.) which was used to develop the summer criteria adopted in the January 2007 rulemaking hearing (see sections VII & VIII.).

In addition to addressing the TAC's recommendations, the WQCD and stakeholders defined circumstances where exceedances would be allowable including exclusions for air temperature, low-flow, and adequate refuge in lakes and reservoirs (section V). Some specific aspects of implementing temperature standards into permits, such as the exemption for discharges from natural hot springs, were adopted into section 31.14(14)(b). But rather than exempting a wide range of dischargers in the Basic Standards Regulation, the Commission directed the WQCD to include appropriate exemptions as part of the reasonable potential guidance (31.45).

### **III. CENTRAL CONCEPTS**

It is the policy of the Commission to establish temperature standards to protect against negative effects to aquatic life. These include a range of effects from lethality to decreased rates of growth and reproduction.

A combination of criteria that can protect from adverse effects of temperature include:

- an acute or maximum temperature criterion (lethality),
- a chronic criterion for a longer duration average (growth, etc.),
- a season/location/species specific spawning criteria (sensitive life stages),
- a criterion to maintain a normal temperature pattern (upstream/downstream, normal spatial variability),
- a criterion to avoid effects due to sudden temporary changes (thermal shock).
- a criterion to maintain normal seasonal and diel temperature patterns.

Establishing limits on both maximum (acute) and average (chronic) temperatures offers the best opportunity to protect aquatic life, and is appropriate to address the variety of temperature regimes found in Colorado. This approach also allows for the use of both lethal and non-lethal effects data in deriving acute and chronic criteria as described below.

#### **A. Elements of Criterion**

The three elements of criterion are magnitude, duration, and frequency. Criterion magnitude specifies acceptable ambient levels of a pollutant or other parameter. Criterion duration is the period of time over which data are averaged for comparison with a criterion-magnitude. Criterion frequency is the element of a numeric water quality criterion describing how often waterbody conditions can surpass the combined magnitude and duration components (i.e., specifying the allowed number of excursions that can occur within a certain period of time (i.e., the acceptable rate of excursions). All three elements of criterion will be addressed in this policy document.

#### **B. Acute Temperature Criterion**

The acute temperature criterion provides protection against lethal effects that elevated temperature can cause. Short duration, acute numeric criteria are useful for addressing short duration changes in ambient temperature (e.g., associated with an intermittent discharge) and also daily high temperatures due to seasonal warming. Acute numeric

criterion is also useful where monitoring is intermittent, and the available ambient data are not sufficient to compare to a chronic criteria.

**C. Chronic Temperature Criterion**

The chronic temperature criterion provides protection against sublethal effects on behavior, metabolism, growth, and reproduction.

**D. Protection for Sensitive Life Stages Criterion**

Sensitive life-stages (e.g., eggs and fry) and critical activities (e.g., migrations, spawning) related to reproduction need to be considered when developing temperature criteria. The temperatures during spawning seasons must be protective of the offspring (i.e., eggs, fry, early life stages).

**E. Protection of Normal Temperature Pattern**

Attainment of the acute and chronic numeric table values may not be sufficient alone to protect the aquatic community if the seasonal and diel temperature patterns are not maintained. Variations from the normal temperature pattern can have biological consequences, such as shifts in migration timing, incubation rates, and spawning timing as well as interfere with essential rearing periods.

**F. Protection Against Thermal Shock Provision**

Thermal shock provisions provide another way to address short duration changes attributable to discharges. “Thermal shock” can result from sudden releases of very hot water, and can result in serious sublethal or lethal conditions for fish (Parker and Krenkel, 1969). Sudden discharges of hot water can overwhelm a fish’s heat tolerance range, its ability to acclimate to changes in ambient water temperatures, and its avoidance reactions. Likewise, sudden discharges of cold water can have similar effects. Thermal shock can lead to increased susceptibility to predation, increased avoidance energy costs, increased metabolism and resultant oxygen and food requirements that may be difficult to meet, and other negative effects (McCullough, 1999; McCullough et. al., 2001).

**G. Community Composition**

This concept refers to how species are grouped to protect the biological community that is expected to occur in the area. Aquatic life cold and warm use classifications are too general to capture the natural temporal and spatial variability associated with temperature in the state of Colorado.

**H. Adoption of Criteria into Standards**

Standards protect the uses of a waterbody. The temperature standards adopted in 2007 and revised in 2010 are designed to protect the Aquatic Life use.

#### **IV. CRITERIA - MAGNITUDE**

The Commission adopted two criteria based on a literature review of temperature effects data for fish species present in Colorado. The acute criterion protects against lethality, and the chronic criterion protects against adverse effects that could include reduction of growth or reproduction. The Commission also chose to create special provisions for protection against thermal shock and to protect sensitive life stages.

The acute and chronic criteria chosen by the Commission are defined in Sections A and B below:

##### **A. Acute Criteria**

The acute criterion for the fish community that is expected to be present is calculated using the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of species-specific acute values. Species-specific values were based on the lethal temperature for that species minus a margin of safety (MOS).

This criterion uses the upper incipient lethal temperature (UILT) and ultimate upper incipient lethal temperature (UUILT) data derived using acclimation temperatures typical of summertime water temperatures in Colorado (see VIII. D. 1. for definitions). In some cases, lethal data from critical thermal maximum (CTM) studies were used for species that lacked UILT/UUILT data.

A MOS is subtracted from the species-specific lethal values to take the acute criterion from a lethal level to a sub-lethal level. These species-specific acute values are ranked and the value for the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of species in the community is chosen as the overall acute criterion (e.g., if there are 100 species, this would generally equate to the value that protects 95 of the 100 species). The 95<sup>th</sup> percentile is not appropriate where a more protective approach is deemed necessary to protect a commercially, recreationally, or environmentally important species (e.g. cutthroat trout).

The details of how species-specific acute criteria were calculated are discussed in section VIII. F. 1. of this document. Details of how community acute criteria were calculated are discussed in section VIII. G. 1. of this document.

##### **B. Chronic Criteria**

The chronic criterion for the fish community that is expected to be present is calculated using the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of species-specific chronic values. Species-specific values were based on the upper optimum temperature for that species, or surrogate data if upper optimum data were not available.

The chronic species criteria data were ranked and the value for the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile was chosen (e.g. if there are 100 species, this would generally equate to the value that protects 95 of the 100 species). This criterion is intended to protect 95 percent of the species present (provided that commercially, recreationally or environmentally important species

are protected) at the upper bound of their optimal levels. The 95<sup>th</sup> percentile was determined not appropriate to protect commercially, recreationally or environmentally important species. In these situations, the chronic criterion was set to the species specific chronic value to fully protect the species of interest (e.g., cutthroat trout).

The details of how species-specific chronic criteria were calculated are discussed in section VIII. F. 2. of this document. The details of how community chronic criteria were calculated are discussed in section VIII. G. 1. of this document.

## **C. Special Provisions**

In 2007, special provisions were adopted to protect spawning, thermal shock, normal seasonal fluctuations, normal diel fluctuations, and normal spatial variability. Commission policies and the efforts to protect these functions are described below.

### **1. Reproduction**

It is the policy of the Commission that protection of spawning/reproduction from anthropogenic thermal effects is appropriate.

In preparation for the 2007 hearing, the WQCD investigated the possibility of compiling a database of spawning temperatures and dates, but found that such data were not available. Instead, spawning numbers from the EPA “Gold book” were used as a basis to set seasonal temperature standards for cold waters (streams, lakes, and reservoirs).

This approach not only protects the thermal regime needed for spawning and survival of embryos, but also helps ensure that normal seasonal temperature patterns are maintained by requiring that winter temperatures be substantially cooler than summer temperatures. The chronic cold-water winter temperature standard is 9 °C based on the spawning temperature requirements of brook trout and rainbow trout (31.16(3) Table 1). The acute cold-water winter temperature standard is 13 °C based on the maximum temperature for successful incubation and hatching of embryos for all Salmonids listed. It was noted that the cold-water winter temperature criteria were about 50% of the summer criteria and this relationship was applied to warm waters, where spawning data was not as readily available.

The winter standards for coldwater streams apply from October through May. This duration is based on the typical timing of fall and spring spawning for Salmonids, and on broad attainability of these standards. The seasonal duration can be extended or shortened on a site-specific basis. For all lakes and reservoirs, the winter criteria apply from January through March. This adjustment was based on empirical temperature data from lakes and reservoirs, which have large water volumes that cool slowly in the fall.

For warm waters, the winter chronic and acute values are 50% of the summer values. A halving of the summer values set the criteria below the threshold that triggers spawning in warm-water fish. This should ensure that fish are not being induced to spawn in the winter by anthropogenic warming, when food is scarce and/or the appropriate habitat, such as floodplains, may not be available. The warm-water winter criteria for streams apply December through February.

The following table shows the default assumptions for when ELS are present for each species and temperature tier associated with those species.

<b>Colorado Fishes, Early Life Stage Expectation and Temperature Criteria Tiers</b>													
<b>Shaded cells indicate ELS default assumption.</b>													
<b>Species</b>	<b>Temp. Tier</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D</b>
Cutthroat Trout	CS-I				S	S	S	S,I	I,E				
Brook Trout	CS-I	I	I	E	E	E				S	S	I	I
Mountain Whitefish	CS-II	I	I	I						S	S	S	I
Mottled Sculpin	CS-II					S	S						
Brown Trout	CS-II	S,I	I	I	I,E					S	S	S	S
Golden Trout	CS-II						S	S	I,E				
Longnose Sucker	CS-II			S	S	S	S	S					
Rainbow Trout	CS-II			S	S	S	S	I	E				
Mountain Sucker	CS-II						S	S					
Lake Trout	CL	I	I	I	I						S	S	S,I
Kokanee	CL	I	I	I						S	S	S	I
A. Grayling	CL				S	S	S	S,I					
White Sucker	WS-II				S	S	S	S	S				
Brook Stickleback	WS-II						S	S					
Longnose Dace	WS-II					S	S	S					
Creek Chub	WS-II				S	S	S	S	S				
N. Redbelly Dace	WS-II					S	S	S					
Flathead Chub	WS-III					S	S	S	S				
Lake Chub	WS-III					S	S						
Spottail Shiner	WS-III						S	S	S				
Sand Shiner	WS-III					S	S	S	S				
Brassy Minnow	WS-III					S	S						
Plains Minnow	WS-III				S	S	S	S	S				
Fathead Minnow	WS-III					S	S	S	S				
N. Pike Minnow	WS-III					S	S	S					
Redside Shiner	WS-III					S	S	S	S				
River Carpsucker	WS-III					S	S						
Bluehead Sucker	WS-III				S	S	S						
Carp	WS-III					S	S	S					
Golden Shiner	WS-III					S	S	S					
Iowa Darter	WS-III					S	S	S					
Black Bullhead	WS-III					S	S	S					
Channel Catfish	WS-III					S	S	S					
Green Sunfish	WS-III					S	S	S	S				
Pumpkinseed	WL					S	S						
Bluegill	WL					S	S	S					
Northern Pike	WL				S	S							
White Crappie	WL					S	S	S					

Black Crappie	WL					S	S						
Yellow Perch	WL				S	S	S						
Sauger	WL				S	S							
Walleye	WL				S	S							
Smallmouth Bass	WL					S	S						
Largemouth Bass	WL					S	S	S					
S=Spawning Period, I=Incubation period for eggs, E=Time period in which sac-fry are in the gravels.													

**2. Thermal Shock Provision**

It is the policy of the Commission that a provision against an in-stream or in-lake temperature change that could result in thermal shock is warranted, but that it may be difficult to implement.

Thermal shock proved to be one of the most difficult aspects of temperature criteria development. In the 2007 hearing, a spatial or temporal limitation of temperature change could not be agreed upon, therefore a narrative standard to protect against thermal shock was adopted by the Commission, as follows:

“Temperature shall maintain a normal pattern of diel and seasonal fluctuations and spatial diversity *with no abrupt changes* and shall have no increase in temperature of magnitude, rate, and duration deleterious to aquatic life.” (italics added) 31.16(3) Table 1, footnote (5)

The 2007 Statement of Basis and Purpose indicates that the WQCD will impose permit conditions where best professional judgment indicates protection is necessary to protect the use from abrupt thermal changes. In preparation for the 2010 hearing, the Division reviewed new information, but did not find data that would support a proposal for additional regulatory provisions to protect against thermal shock. The WQCD will also continue to explore means to protect aquatic life from anthropogenic thermal shock, with particular emphasis on an implementation strategy that is straightforward (31.45).

**3. Seasonal/Diel Fluctuations and Spatial Diversity**

It is the policy of the Commission to maintain normal seasonal/diel temperature fluctuations as well as normal variability in the temperature of the stream or lake.

In the 2007 hearing, the Commission chose to adopt the following narrative standard to ensure that seasonal/diel fluctuations and spatial diversity are maintained:

“Temperature shall maintain a *normal pattern of diel and seasonal fluctuations and spatial diversity* with no abrupt changes and shall have no increase in temperature of magnitude, rate, and duration deleterious to aquatic life.” (italics added) 31.16(3) Table 1, footnote (5)

With respect to seasonal and diel fluctuations, the Commission decided that a single value to protect summertime diel fluctuation would not address the myriad of site-specific conditions, and so is relying on the narrative standard. The 2007 Statement of Basis and Purpose indicates that the WQCD will impose permit conditions where best professional judgment indicates such protection is necessary to protect the use, as directed by the Commission (31.45).

With respect to spatial variability, the Commission does not see a way to quantify spatial diversity in regulation at this time. The 2007 Statement of Basis and Purpose indicates that the WQCD will use its discretion to implement the narrative requirement for spatial diversity in situations where there is evidence that an activity does or will create spatial uniformity that will threaten or impair aquatic life, as directed by the Commission (31.45).

## **V. CRITERIA – FREQUENCY**

In 2007, the Commission determined the Maximum Weekly Average Temperature (MWAT) or the Daily Max (DM) (see section VI for definitions) should not be exceeded more than once every three years, unless one of three exemptions were applicable (31.16(3) Table 1, footnote (5)(c)).

In 2010, the Commission changed the air temperature exclusion from an annual maximum air temperature to a monthly maximum air temperature, and added a fourth exemption for the winter shoulder-seasons in cold-water streams (31.16(3) Table 1, footnote (5)(c)(iv)).

These exemptions are:

- (1). An air temperature exemption that allows for the standard to be exceeded when the air temperature exceeds the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile value of the monthly maximum air temperatures calculated using at least 10 years of air temperature data.

In 2010, the Commission changed the annual maximum air temperature to a monthly maximum air temperature, so it is possible to exclude data from any extraordinarily warm day for any time of year and not just in summer when the maximum annual temperature occurs.

- (2). A low flow exemption that allows for the standard to be exceeded when the daily stream flow falls below the acute critical low flow or monthly average stream flow falls below the chronic critical low flow, calculated pursuant to Regulation 31.9(1).

- (3). A lake and reservoir exemption that allows temperature exceedances in the mixed layer of a stratified lake if an adequate refuge is present below the mixed

layer. Adequate refuge depends on the concurrent attainment of the applicable dissolved oxygen standard and applicable temperature standard.

(4). A winter shoulder-season exemption that allows temperature exceedances in cold-water streams for 30-days before the winter/summer transition, and 30-days after the summer/winter transition, provided that the natural seasonal progression of temperature is maintained and those exceedances are not the result of anthropogenic activities in the watershed.

This exemption does not change the underlying winter standard, and has no effect on permit limits. This exclusion was not applied to lakes or warm-water streams because there was no evidence that spring or fall temperature fluctuations occur naturally outside of the regulatory “summer” season in these systems.

## **VI. CRITERIA – DURATION**

In 2007 the Commission defined the implementation statistics for temperature as follows:

1. Maximum Weekly Average Temperature (MWAT): The MWAT is the largest mathematical mean of multiple, equally spaced, daily temperatures over a seven-day consecutive period, with a minimum of three data points spaced equally throughout the day. For lakes and reservoirs, the MWAT is assumed to be equivalent to the maximum WAT from at least three profiles distributed throughout the growing season (31.5(25).)
2. Daily Maximum Temperature (DM): The DM is the highest two-hour average water temperature recorded during a 24-hour period (31.5(13)).
3. Weekly Average Temperature (WAT): The WAT is a mathematical mean of multiple, equally spaced, daily temperatures over a seven-day consecutive period, with a minimum of three data points spaced equally throughout the day. For lakes and reservoirs, the WAT is assumed to be equivalent to the average temperature of the mixed layer. The average temperature of the mixed layer is determined from a vertical profile of equally-spaced temperature measurements, separated by not more than one meter (31.5(49)).

In 2010, the Commission slightly revised the definition of the MWAT.

The word “daily” was removed from the definition to clarify that the standard is assessed as a rolling average; no intermediate daily-statistic needs to be calculated. The word “summertime” was added to clarify that seasonal summer and winter standards also apply to lakes (31.5(25)). Therefore, winter temperature measurements would not be compared to the summer MWAT.

## **VII. COMMUNITY COMPOSITION**

In 2007, the Commission adopted temperature ‘tiers’ within the cold and warm categories. The fish within a ‘tier’ have similar thermal requirements, and the criteria in the first ‘tier’ of both the warm and cold communities have the coolest thermal requirements, while subsequent tiers are less thermally sensitive. For cold streams, two temperature ‘tiers’ were adopted. The criteria for the first tier were based upon the thermal requirements of the most thermally sensitive cold-water species: cutthroats and brook trout. The criteria for the second cold tier were based on ‘not-sensitive’ species, including brown and rainbow trout and the remaining cold-water species.

For warm-water streams, four temperature ‘tiers’ were adopted in 2007. The criteria for the first tier were based upon the most thermally sensitive warm-water species: common shiner, Johnny darter, and orangethroat darter. The criteria for the second tier were based upon ‘other sensitive species’ including brook stickleback, central stoneroller, creek chub, longnose dace, Northern redbelly dace, finescale dace, and white sucker. The criteria for the third tier were based upon the razorback sucker, which is a federally listed endangered species. Finally, the criteria for the fourth tier were based upon all the remaining warm-water fishes in the database, which all had less stringent thermal requirements than fish in the first three tiers.

In 2010, the Commission deleted one warm tier, which was based upon the thermal requirements of the razorback sucker only. The Commission deleted this tier because it would not apply to any segment. DOW has found that the white sucker, which is more thermally sensitive than the razorback sucker, exists everywhere the razorback sucker is expected to occur. The razorback sucker was incorporated into warm tier two, which also includes the white sucker.

In 2007, the Commission also adopted separate criteria for lakes and reservoirs in recognition of their distinct assemblage of fishes. For cold waters, separate criteria were adopted for small lakes (less than 100 acres surface area) and large lakes (100 acres or greater surface area). The 100 acre threshold is based on CDOW’s lake management criteria for fish. Large lakes generally do not have cutthroat or brook trout, which are the most sensitive to temperature, therefore the criteria for large lakes are not based upon those species. The Commission intends to adopt site-specific criteria for the few large lakes that do contain, or are managed for, those sensitive cold-water species. Size distinctions play a less significant and consistent role in dictating warm-water lakes species assemblages, thus warm-water lake criteria apply to all warm lakes regardless of size.

## **VIII. METHODOLOGY TO DEVELOP CRITERIA**

The Commission endorsed the following methodology to develop temperature table values in Colorado. This section includes recommended methods on the overall process to determine temperature standards, how to screen the data, the use of lab and field data, how to calculate acute and chronic species criteria, and how to calculate community criteria.

## **A. General Data Collection Process**

These are the general guidelines for all data included in the Colorado Temperature Database. The Commission recommends the following methodology to determine water quality criteria for temperature:

### **1. Data Screening**

The studies are screened for applicability to Colorado temperature criteria. Data screening guidelines are included Section IX, Data Quality Screening Guidelines below.

### **2. Database Compilation**

All data that passes the initial data screening should be added to the database. All appropriate information should be included. It is important to cast a wide net to capture all types of information. Any additional information that may influence the results must be noted in the "Notes" field.

### **3. Species Specific Criteria Calculations**

Species-specific temperature criteria are calculated (both acute and chronic). See subsection F. 1. in this section below for acute and chronic methodology.

### **4. Community Composition Analysis**

An analysis of fish thermal sensitivity and community composition is used to determine where separate categories or subcategories (tiers) of temperature standards are needed in the table values. Various categories and subcategories should be investigated to see if they have thermal requirements that deserve a distinct table value. If the data shows no difference from the subcategory community criteria and the overall table value, then there would be no need to make that distinction. If a significant difference was noted then it may be appropriate to have separate table values for a subcategory of the use. This could alleviate an overly conservative temperature value for some circumstances or offer more protection for more sensitive species. Table values will be calculated for the existing use classifications and for the following subcategories:

- East Slope versus West Slope
- West Slope T&E Species
- Aquatic Life Cold Streams
- Aquatic Life Cold, Lakes and Reservoir
- Aquatic Life Warm Streams
- Aquatic Life Warm Lakes and Reservoir
- Transition Zone

- Cutthroat Trout
- Varying Elevation Zones
- Small versus Large Lakes and Reservoirs
- Thermal 'tier' groupings

The Commission intends the following actions to occur in regard to the subcategories listed above:

- a. The Division will compile data for the subcategory in question.
- b. From the database, calculate a subcategory-specific table value for both acute and chronic. These table values will be calculated using the same procedures as temperature table values, but only using data for the specific species present.
- c. Determine whether this subcategory-specific table value is significantly lower or higher than the table value for the appropriate use. If it is, the Division will recommend a subcategory-specific table value.
- d. The Commission will consider adoption of this subcategory-specific table value to be applied to streams where this specific community is present or expected to be present on a case-by-case basis.

## **B. Data Screening**

Data screening guidelines are included Section IX, Data Quality Screening Guidelines below.

## **C. The role/use of lab data**

The Commission intends laboratory-derived temperature tolerance data to be used to develop the criteria. Data from primary scientific literature should be collected, reviewed and compiled into a database. Data screening guidelines are included in Section IX, Data Quality Screening Guidelines, in this Policy document. Field data are used to validate lab data when available.

The following excerpt of Sullivan et al, 2000<sup>1</sup> discusses the use of field and lab data by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other agencies have conducted water quality research over the years to accomplish two major objectives: 1) develop cause-and effect relationships between water quality conditions and

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<sup>1</sup> Sullivan K., D. Martin, R. Cardwell, J. Toll, and S. Duke. 2000. *An analysis of the Effects of Temperature on Salmonids of the Pacific Northwest With Implications for Selecting Temperature Criteria*. Sustainable Ecosystems Institute, Portland OR

biological response, and 2) develop repeatable methodologies that use research findings to craft regulatory water quality criteria grounded in sound science. A primary technique used by researchers is to subject fish and other aquatic organisms to pollutants in a controlled laboratory setting to determine the relationship between dosage, length of exposure and biological responses such as growth loss, stress, altered behavior, disease, or death. Such laboratory-based research has been a cornerstone of fisheries science during this century and its validity has been confirmed in field-based studies (Brett 1971, Shuter et al. 1980, Baker et al. 1995, Filbert and Hawkins 1995). Conversely field observations alone are often not reliable for deriving water quality criteria because of variability in the natural environment and the complexity of factors controlling natural systems and habitat response. Brett (1971) observed that “it is inherently difficult to examine existing conditions and deduce the important biological factors which have occurred in the past to explain the present”. Laboratory studies were the basis for EPA recommended temperature criteria (U.S. EPA 1977) and field studies have been used mainly for validating the appropriateness of water quality criteria (Hansen 1989, Mount et al. 1984).

#### **D. Data that should be used**

All thermal tolerance data should be recorded in the database in case there is a need to use it in the future should the methodologies in this policy document change. The following data are preferred:

##### **1. Acute Thermal Endpoints:**

- a. Ultimate Upper Incipient Lethal Temperature (UUILT): UUILT is the highest Upper Incipient Lethal Temperature (UILT) that can be produced by selection of an acclimation temperature. Further increases in acclimation temperatures do not result in higher UILT values.
- b. Upper Incipient Lethal Temperature (UILT): UILT is an estimate of acute exposure maximum temperature relative to a previous acclimation temperature. It is the temperature at which 50% of the test organisms die within a 1- or 7-day exposure period, given a previous acclimation to a constant lower temperature that is within the zone of tolerance of the organism. Generally, the higher the acclimation temperature, the higher will be the UILT, until the UUILT is reached. At this point, further increases in acclimation temperature do not result in any further increase in UILT.

In most UILT studies fish are transferred from the acclimation tank to the experimental tank, so the temperature change experienced by the fish is instantaneous. However, it should be noted that there are deviations from this method.

- c. Critical Thermal Maximum (CTM) Data: CTM is an estimate of the median temperature reached in a quickly increasing temperature environment (usually 3°C/min) that produces loss of equilibrium, spasms, or death of test organisms. Important factors in CTM studies include the rate of temperature change and the initial acclimation temperature. CTM studies typically give higher values than do UILT studies, probably because the temperature change is more gradual than the instantaneous temperature change that is typically used in UILT studies.

In the January 2007 hearing, a conversion factor may be used to estimate median UILT/UUILT from the median CTM. While UILT /UUILT are the preferred metrics for use in calculating acute values for each species in Colorado, this type of data was unavailable for many Colorado fish species as of 2007. The critical thermal maximum (CTM) is a more common experimental method for determining lethal values for fish, but generally gives higher lethal values than UILT/UUILT. For species that did not have UILT/UUILT, but did have CTM data, the CTM value minus a conversion factor was used as a surrogate for UILT/UUILT data. For warm-water species a conversion factor of 0.8 was used. This value was calculated from the 2005 temperature database, and is the median value of the median CTM minus the median UILT for all warm-water species where both metrics were available. For cold-water species, the conversion factor was calculated the same way, but instead of taking the mean of all the species values, the conversion factor was used on a species-specific basis. Thus, a different conversion factor was used for each cold-water species.

<b>Values used to convert CTM values to UILT values.</b>	
<b>CTM-conversion factor=UILT</b>	
<b>Species</b>	<b>conversion factor °C</b>
all warm-water	0.8
cutthroat trout	4.4
brook trout	1.3
brown trout	1.3
rainbow trout	0.8

**2. Chronic Thermal Endpoints:**

- a. Optimum Temperature (OT): The optimum temperature is derived from the species-specific performance over a range of temperatures and includes parameters such as growth rate, digestion rate, gross conversion efficiency, swimming performance, metabolic rate, cardiac rate, etc.

Optimum temperature data from various studies are combined by taking the median of all reported optima data including lower and upper optima. This results in one central tendency OT value for a given species.

Growth optimum is the most common measure of optimum temperature. In these studies, groups of fish are raised over a range of experimental temperatures, and the size of the fish in each group is measured over a period of time. Each group is held at a constant temperature for the period of study, and the fish are typically fed as much as they can eat during that time. The growth over the period of study is usually measured as wet-weight, or length. The temperature at which the fish grow the most is the optimum temperature.

In growth optimum studies, the experimental temperatures should not be confused with acclimation temperature. The acclimation temperature is the temperature the fish were held at *before* the study began, and is usually not relevant since the studies are run for a longer period of time.

- b. Final Preferred Temperature/Preferred Temperature: Final preferred temperature for fish given a wide range of thermal choices and enough time to select the temperature (multiple days) is also an appropriate surrogate for OT data. Acclimation temperature should not play a role in final preferred temperature selection, because studies of preference should be long enough that any prior acclimation effect is superseded by the exposure to the experimental temperature; in thermal preference studies where the fish are given enough time to select their final preferred temperature, the same thing should happen.

Preferred temperature for fish given a wide range of thermal choices and enough time to select the temperature can be an appropriate surrogate for OT data. For preferred temperature, acclimation temperature does play a role in temperature selection, but this effect can be offset by using only data obtained from acclimation temperatures within the range of normal summertime water temperatures in Colorado.

Preference and final preference may be measured in vertical gradients, horizontal gradients, or shuttleboxes that allow fish to move between compartments of varying temperature.

- c. Avoided High: Avoided high is typically measured in shuttleboxes where the temperature in the occupied box is raised until the fish decides to exit the box for a cooler environment.

### **3. Other data that should be recorded:**

- a. Acclimation temperature and duration: the temperature within a species' tolerance zone that test fish are experimentally exposed to for several days

(usually at least 14 days) before a tolerance test (Armour, 1991).  
Acclimation temperature affects the temperature range that a fish can tolerate.

- b. Life stage: The life stage of the test organism at the time of the study is important to record.
- c. Full reference: The full citation of the study will be recorded in the database.
- d. Location: Whether the experiment took place in a lab, semi-natural conditions (such as outdoor ponds), or in the field will be recorded in the database.
- e. Number of replicates and sample size: The number of replicates and/or the global sample size shall be recorded where appropriate.
- f. Origin of fish: The origin of the fish used in the study will be recorded in the database (wild caught, hatchery, pet store, etc).
- g. Endpoint of CTM studied: The endpoint used for CTM studies will be recorded in the database (loss of equilibrium, spasms, or death)
- h. Relevant experimental procedures: Rates of temperature change for CTM studies, or other important details will be recorded in the database.

#### **E. The role/use of field data**

The Commission intends field data to be used as validation of the calculated standards. In other words, field observations should be used to ground truth the values derived from laboratory test results.

Where field observations indicate that a species thought to be sensitive (based on laboratory data) thrives in conditions that are warmer than predicted by the laboratory data, such information should be considered in determining whether the criteria or standards need to be adjusted. Likewise, where field observations indicate that unacceptable effects occur at temperatures thought to be protective (based on lab data) such information should be considered in determining whether the criteria or standards need to be adjusted.

#### **F. Species Criteria were developed based on the following steps:**

##### **1. Acute Species Criterion:**

- a. Acute Species Criterion: It is the policy of the commission to protect aquatic species from lethal effects due to temperature. A margin of safety (MOS) is

subtracted from the temperature that causes death in order to obtain a sub-lethal criterion.

- b. Data Collection: Query all thermal tolerance data with lethal (or near lethal endpoints) from the most current version of Colorado Temperature Database. This includes ultimate upper incipient lethal temperature (UUILT), upper incipient lethal temperature (UILT), and critical thermal maximum (CTM) data for each species.
- c. Data Consolidation: Compile all UUILT/UILT (or CTM if UUILT/UILT are not available) data derived using acclimation temperatures typical of summertime temperatures in Colorado. For cold water, normal summertime temperatures fall between 7 and 23 °C, unless the lowest CTM for that cold-water species is less than 23 °C. In that case, use the lowest CTM as the upper limit for screening data. For warm water, normal summertime temperatures are between 15 and 30 °C, unless the lowest CTM for that warm-water species is less than 30 °C. In that case, use the lowest CTM as the upper limit for screening data. Any data with acclimation temperatures outside the normal range of summer temperatures should be excluded from the calculations. Field studies should also be excluded from the calculations as well as studies using eggs, embryos, and larvae.

If UILT/UUILT data are not available for a given species a conversion factor can be used to convert the median CTM to an estimate of the median UILT/UUILT.

$$\text{Median CTM} - \text{conversion factor} = \text{median UILT/UUILT}$$

For cold water species, use the following conversion factors: cutthroat trout 4.4, brook trout 1.3, brown trout 1.3, and rainbow trout 0.8. For all warm-water fishes use a conversion factor of 0.8. A more scientifically valid conversion factor should be used if a better method of conversion becomes available.

- d. Data Selection: Select the median of the. UILT/UUILT data, or use the estimate of median UILT/UUILT derived from the converted median CTM.
- e. Determination of MOS: Calculate the MOS using the 1/5 rule if appropriate data are available, or a default 2 °C MOS will be used. The 1/5 rule is that the MOS is equal to 1/5 the distance between the median UILT/UUILT and the Upper Optimum.

$$1/5 * (\text{Median UILT/UUILT} - \text{Upper Optimum}) = \text{MOS}$$

The converted median CTM may be used as a surrogate for median UILT/UUILT. Three metrics are possible surrogates for Upper Optimum. In

order of preference they are: median Optimum, median Preferred Average, or the Avoided High with an acclimation temperature closest to the inferred optimum. In this case, the optimum is inferred from the preferred average with the smallest difference between the acclimation temperature and the preferred average.

- f. Include Safety Factor: Subtract a MOS.

$$\text{Median UILT/UUILT} - \text{MOS} = \text{species acute value}$$

- g. Record Species Acute Criteria: This value is then used as the species acute criteria. This value can then be used to determine a community acute criterion, or can be used for any site-specific criteria that focuses on this particular species as the most sensitive species.

## 2. Chronic Species Specific Criterion

It is the policy of the commission to protect aquatic species from sub-lethal effects due to temperature.

- a. Data Collection: Collect all thermal tolerance data with optimal endpoints. This includes OT, GO, preference, and final preferenda. Record upper and lower optima where published. For cold water, normal summertime temperatures fall between 7 and 23 °C, unless the lowest CTM for that cold-water species is less than 23 °C. In that case, use the lowest CTM as the upper limit for screening data. For warm water, normal summertime temperatures are between 15 and 30 °C, unless the lowest CTM for that warm-water species is less than 30 °C. In that case, use the lowest CTM as the upper limit for screening data. Any data with acclimation temperatures outside the normal range of summer temperatures should be excluded from the calculations. Field studies should also be excluded from the calculations as well as studies using eggs, embryos, and larvae.
- b. “Upper Range of Optimum” Calculation: Select the median of the Upper Optimum temperatures reported for growth and reproduction.

If Upper Optimum data are not available, proceed to step c and use the 1/3 Rule to estimate the median Upper Optimum. If there was sufficient data for the Upper Optimum for a species – proceed to step d.

- c. “1/3 Rule” Calculation (where data are not available for the Upper Optimum):
- i. Select the median of all the optimum temperature (OT) data. If Optimum data are not available, two other metrics may be used as surrogates. In order of preference these are median Preferred

Average, or Avoided High with an acclimation temperature closest to the inferred optimum. If using Avoided High, the optimum is inferred from the preferred average with the smallest difference between the acclimation temperature and the preferred average.

- ii. Select the median of the UUILT/UILT temperatures from the data collected. If UILT/UUILT data is not available for a given species the converted CTM (described above in the acute procedure) may be used instead.
- iii. Calculate the Chronic Species Criterion: Using the two temperatures calculated above, calculate the species chronic standard with the following equation:

$$\text{Criterion} = \text{median OT} + 1/3 * (\text{median UUILT/UILT} - \text{median OT})$$

- d. Record Species Chronic Criterion: This value is then used as the species chronic criteria. This value can then be used to determine a community chronic criterion, or can be used for any site-specific criteria that focuses on this particular species as the most sensitive species.

**G. Community Criteria were developed based on the following steps:**

**1. Acute/Chronic Community Criterion**

The Commission determined that community criteria for acute temperature standards should be determined following the same methodology as the chronic temperature criteria. Therefore, there is a need to identify only one methodology for the community criteria. The steps are as follows:

- a. Determine the species that are expected to be present in the specific community.
- b. Compile and rank the species data (acute or chronic) that are available for the expected community.
- c. Calculate the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of the species values. (e.g. if there are 100 species, this would generally equate to the value that protects 95 of the 100 species).
- d. Determine if there are commercially, recreationally, or environmentally important species that would not be protected with the criteria developed using the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile approach. If there are species that are economically or ecologically important that will not be protected using the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile approach, determine the value that would be protective of that species.

- e. The more protective value (from Step c or Step d) becomes the community criterion (acute or chronic).

**IX. DATA QUALITY SCREENING GUIDELINES**

**A. Initial Data Screening Objectives**

The following table outlines elements of a good study, or the data quality objectives, that must be considered when choosing data to be entered in the Colorado Temperature database:

<b>Initial Data Screening Objectives</b>	
<b>Element</b>	<b>A good study includes...</b>
<b><u>Replications</u></b>	An adequate number of replications.
<b><u>Endpoint of the Study</u></b>	The intent to study thermal tolerances and clearly stated biological endpoint that was used.
<b><u>Acclimation History</u></b>	Sufficient time for acclimation.
<b><u>Acclimation Rate</u></b>	The acclimation rate (this applies to Critical Thermal Maximum (CTM), preference, avoidance, performance optimum, and UILT studies).
<b><u>Life Stage</u></b>	The life stage of the test organism.
<b><u>Appropriate Methods</u></b>  <u>Employ appropriate controls</u> Size of Fish	Same size fish are used throughout the study.
<b><u>Appropriate Methods</u></b>  <u>Employ appropriate controls</u>  Feeding State	Well documented Nutritional Status. (Noted that fasted fish prefer colder waters, fed fish prefer warm water, and animals should not be fed within 24 hours of the study to decrease the stress due to digestion.)
<b><u>Appropriate Methods</u></b> <u>Employ appropriate controls</u>  Standard environment	A standard environment should be used.
<b><u>Peer Reviewed Study</u></b>	Evidence that it has been Peer reviewed (Any grey literature should be noted.) Study present in a published scientific journal. Data are from the original study. (although secondary citation may be necessary if the original study is not available)
<b><u>Quality of Animals</u></b>	Good quality Animals. Limit the stress on the animals – limited handling, not abnormally stressed, not subject to prior disease.

<b>Initial Data Screening Objectives</b>	
<b>Element</b>	<b>A good study includes...</b>
<b><u>Field Conditions</u></b> (where appropriate)	Collection under known conditions. Collection from known regions Lab Studies should have light similar to that season.
<b><u>For field studies...</u></b>	A natural environment during testing including competitors and predators. Normal physical environmental conditions/natural substrate, current speed and habitat complexity.
<b><u>From hatchery</u></b>	Information of known origin and history.
<b><u>Number of Tanks for Critical Thermal Maximum (CTM) Studies</u></b>	Information on how many fish per tank. Will not be run with more than one fish per tank.

## **B. Data Screening Process**

Only primary, peer-reviewed scientific literature can be considered for inclusion in the database. No data from compilations or references from other studies are allowed. Papers published in scientific journals, dissertations, and theses, are all considered to be peer-reviewed literature. Section X contains details about the decision process for including or excluding papers from the database. The following steps should be considered in the initial data quality screening.

### **1. Determine if the intent of the study was to investigate how fish respond to changes/differences in temperature (for lab and field studies).**

A few studies included in the database studied other variables in addition to temperatures. Those additional variables were noted in the database. However, only the results from treatment groups where temperature was the only treatment applied were added to the database (usually the control groups).

### **2. Determine if the data make sense.**

Studies must consist of measurements taken over a range of experimental (laboratory) or field conditions to quantitatively define a thermal tolerance, optima, or preference value. Where such values are not defined, but the details are present to allow determination of their equivalents, the equivalents are calculated. Assuming all other criteria are met, the equivalents should be included in the database with a note to indicate how the value was calculated or determined (e.g., read from a figure, calculated from a reported regression equation, etc.).

Specifically excluded are values cited from other studies, and values from anecdotal observations (e.g., temperature of a drying pool that a researcher happens across that contains some dead fish).

The experimental design of each study should be evaluated as to whether the experimental design gives clear thermal tolerance and/or optimum thresholds, particularly if the design deviates from standard procedures. An example of an inadequate experimental design would be a growth study where maximum growth occurred at the highest experimental temperature because it cannot be known if the fish might have grown even more at higher temperatures. Another example of inadequate experimental design would include any study where the fish were stressed or otherwise altered in a way that might affect the outcome of the test (as occurred in one study where the fish were subjected to brain surgery before testing).

Where a tolerance, preference, or optimum is reported, whether these are medians, modes, or averages was recorded in the notes. Where they were reported as a range, a median value was recorded in the database with an appropriate note, in addition to the upper and lower values reported.

### **3. Was the replication adequate?**

Replication means that a study was repeated. For CTM studies, each separate and simultaneous run of a fish, or group of fish is a replicate, but few studies met the suggested requirement of 10 replicates suggested by the TAC. Despite this, most studies produced results that were similar to those studies that did have 10 replicates (when those studies were available for comparison for a given species).

For UILT studies, tests of survival rates over time for fish exposed to a given temperature do not represent an individual replicate. In order to replicate a study, one would need to repeat the whole set of lethal temperature exposures. This wasn't done in any UILT study reviewed. The sample sizes of fish treated at each temperature in UILT studies ( $n$ ), as well as the global sample size or the total number of fish used ( $N$ ), were recorded in the database for UILT studies in most cases.

Those UILT studies that were conducted with an average of less than 5 fish per temperature exposure, generally also had a low global sample size that would be detrimental to the precision or accuracy of the results. Studies with per-treatment sample sizes less than 5 were included in the database only when there were little or no other UILT data for a species. The sample sizes  $n$  and  $N$  were noted in the database, allowing database users to make a determination on whether these values should be included in the calculations.

### **4. If it is a laboratory study, are the design criteria met?**

Check to see that the study did not deviate substantially from typical test procedures for upper incipient lethal and/or critical thermal maximum described in question 2. Data included in the database from experiments that deviated from

standard procedures was recorded in the ‘notes’ fields. Some of the studies included in the database deviated from the standard experimental design, but the results were otherwise reasonable compared to similar studies. Variations on the standard designs for UILT, CTM, and Preference studies were noted in the ‘experimental design’ field. For example, the rate of temperature change used in CTM studies, and whether the UILT study involved a transfer of fish to a new temperature, or an increase of temperatures within the tanks to the various final lethal temperature treatment levels. Preference studies were generally conducted by one three means (horizontal gradients, vertical gradients, or shuttlebox), and the method was recorded in the database.

**5. Verify that field studies have appropriate experimental designs and do not have confounding stressors that may have altered the results. (e.g. in metals impacted streams)**

‘Preference’ studies from the field, which used either observation of fish in combination with temperature measurements, or temperature-sensitive telemetry devices were not reported as preferences in the database, but instead as water temperature occupied by fish. Field studies that did not present a reliable method of estimating or measuring water temperature at the site of fish observations or captures were not included in the database. Additional qualifiers and details of the study design were reported in the notes and experimental design fields. Sample sizes were reported in the replicates/sample size column.

**6. Does the study return a set of useable, numeric values?**

Qualifiers should be examined at this stage in the process.

The results of the data screening process will result in three sets of studies:

- 1. USE** –These studies have met the quality requirements and have been included in the Colorado Temperature Database. Additionally, these studies have met the requirements for appropriate acclimation temperature, appropriate life stage, and are lab studies.
- 2. SAVE** –These studies are of good quality and will be included in the Colorado Temperature Database, but should not necessarily be used in calculations. It is up to the user to eliminate unacceptable studies (such as field data, embryos, data with acclimation temperatures outside the range of summertime values, etc.) from the calculations. By including all good quality data in the database, users can decide what data to include or excluded from calculations. Also, the appropriateness of the data to be included in the calculations can be reevaluated in the future.
- 3. DISCARD** –These studies are not recommended for any use, and will not be entered into the database.

A list of all studies considered for inclusion in the database will be kept by the WQCD so that rejected studies need not be evaluated repeatedly.

**C. Data Rich Scenario**

The policy of the Commission is that all studies are equal after the study/data quality screening is completed – no study should have more weight than another. Likewise, no studies should be discounted if it passes the initial data screening. In a rulemaking hearing the Commission may choose to exclude some data if a good rationale is presented.

**D. Data Poor Scenario**

The policy of the Commission is only use good quality data. Data that does not pass the initial data screening should not be used. In a rulemaking hearing, if there are no data for a species, the Commission may choose to include data from a surrogate species if a good rationale is presented.

**E. Data Qualifiers**

Qualifiers (such as less than, or more than) should be recorded and then some level of professional judgment will have to be applied as to how to handle that data. There may be many types of qualifiers that need to be recorded along with any numeric value. It is important for the compiler/analyst to recognize all the kinds of experimental conditions that could have a bearing on the results so that the results can be compared and contrasted. Some qualifiers might cause some numeric values to be discounted somewhat in importance if the conditions producing the result were somehow anomalous, unusual, or not typical of natural conditions or likely to elicit abnormal responses.

Regardless, significant qualifiers or caveats that are associated with experimental results should be collected and included in the dataset.

In many cases the temperature tolerance data are presented with the “less than” and/or “greater than.” The Commission recommends that these are handled in the following manner:

1. For optimum temperatures and UILT, the value X in a “> X” situation should be entered as the lower optimum or as an unadjusted UILT (that is, do not adjust with the 2 °C safety factor). This is a conservative/protective approach, and allows the data to be used.
2. Do not use “X” temperature in an “< X” scenario for optimum and UILT temperature.

It could overestimate the value. For example using UILT data, the study reported a UILT of <17 °C but the study was conducted between 17-21 °C. If the species OT is actually 15 °C then using 17 °C does not reflect the optimum. Where possible, the data qualifiers should be interpreted in the most conservative fashion. Where the range of temperatures was not sufficient to establish a discrete UILT, the study was not included in the database

3. These data should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

## **X. DATABASE**

### **A. Location**

The temperature database will be housed at the Water Quality Control Division. The Commission recommends that the most current version of the Colorado Temperature Database be made available on the WQCD's website, or that contact information be made readily available to the public for accessing the database.

### **B. Updates**

The database will be updated when a recalculation procedure has occurred. Recalculations must involve a literature search for any new data. The database can also be updated with new studies as they are found.

### **C. Papers Considered for Inclusion in the Database**

It is important that the data included in the Colorado Temperature Database are scientifically sound. As additional references become available, the Division will review the data to ensure that the scientific integrity of the Colorado Temperature Database is maintained. All studies included in the database in the future should meet the guidelines outlined in section IX.

If a dispute arises between the WQCD and a stakeholder about the inclusion or exclusion of a study in the Colorado Temperature Database, the WQCD may solicit an external review of the study. The reviewer(s) should comment on the scientific merit of the study, and recommend the paper for inclusion or exclusion in the database.

## **XI. IMPLEMENTATION INTO REGULATIONS**

In 2008 and 2009 the Commission adopted temperature standards for the segments in Regulations 33, 37, and 38, which cover the Colorado, North Platte, and South Platte river basins. Temperature implementation guidance for developing permit effluent limits is available through the WQCD Permits section. Guidance for determining attainment of temperature standards is contained in the 303(d) Listing Methodology.

## **A. Numeric Temperature Criteria**

In the January 2007 hearing, the revised numeric and narrative temperature criteria were incorporated into Table 1 of the Basic Standards. The table value standards recognized two cold-water tiers for streams, four warm-water tiers for streams, cold-water lakes and reservoirs, large cold-water lakes and reservoirs, warm-water lakes and reservoirs, and seasonal winter values for all subcategories. The table values will be used as a basis for adopting segment-specific temperature standards in conjunction with expected fish species distributions, unless evidence establishes that a site-specific numeric standard is appropriate.

Temperature standards are assigned to segments based on available information about the expected fish community, existing temperature data, and any other relevant factors. The appropriate temperature standard for a given segment is based on the temperature tier associated with the most thermally sensitive species expected to be present, unless there are data to support a site-specific standard.

The Commission has adopted temperature standards for segments with aquatic life, but no fish, despite the fact that the temperature criteria are based only on thermal data for fish at this time. Generally, the least restrictive cold or warm temperature tier is applied in these cases. The temperature criteria are intended to protect the aquatic life use classification in general, including other forms of aquatic life for which there are very limited thermal tolerance data.

Where there is uncertainty about the appropriate temperature tier, the Commission adopts temperature standards based upon the available information, and the uncertainty should be recorded in the Statement of Basis and Purpose. The Division, DOW, and/or stakeholders will work to resolve the uncertainty for those segments. Where there is uncertainty about the underlying standard AND data to show that a permitted discharger will have a compliance problem with the adopted temperature standard, a temporary modification may be adopted in accordance with 31.7(3).

In some cases, species in intermediate tiers are not present or expected to be present in transitional segments. Thus, cold stream tier one segments can abut warm stream tier three segments if species in intermediate tiers are not expected to be present.

In transition areas, where cold and warm aquatic species coexist or are expected to be present on a seasonal basis, it may be appropriate to adopt site-specific standards that reflect the seasonal presence of cold-water species.

## **B. Changes in Segmentation**

In some cases, changes to the existing segmentation are needed to facilitate the adoption of appropriate temperature standards. Four general scenarios warrant re-segmentation: (1) separating lakes and streams, (2) separating cold large lakes from cold lakes, (3) separating stream segments, and (4) combining segments.

### **1. Separating Lakes and Streams**

Lakes and streams may be separated into different segments since different temperature tiers have been developed for lakes and streams.

### **2. Separating Cold Large Lakes from Cold Lakes**

Large cold-water lakes (greater than 100 acres surface area) may be separated from small lakes. The assemblage of fish species in large cold-water lakes differs from the assemblage that occurs in small cold-water lakes and, as a result, there are different temperature standards for large versus small cold-water lakes.

### **3. Separating Stream Segments**

Segments may be split into two or more segments where information shows that the aquatic community is not homogenous throughout a segment. For instance, the Commission may split a segment if brook trout or cutthroat trout (cold stream tier 1) are present in the upper portion of a segment, and only rainbow trout or brown trout (cold stream tier 2) are present in the lower portion of the segment.

### **4. Combining Stream Segments**

Segments may be combined where two or more contiguous segments have the same expected aquatic community, anti-degradation designation, use classifications, and similar water-quality.

## **C. Assessing Attainability of Proposed Standards**

The Commission considers the attainability of temperature standards by evaluating water temperature in combination with the published thermal requirements in the Colorado Temperature Database for the expected aquatic community, and the anthropogenic influences on stream temperature. Footnote (5)(c) of Table 1 in 31.16 outlines four cases where high temperatures are not considered exceedances of the standard. Attainability is assessed considering the factors set forth in Regulation 31.6(2)(b)

## **D. Changes to Aquatic Life Use Classifications**

A change in use classification may be warranted where segments with cold-water species have been misclassified as Aquatic Life Warm, or where segments with only warm-water species have been misclassified as Aquatic Life Cold. Errors in classification may be remedied by adjusting segment boundaries, creating new segments, developing site-specific standards, or reclassifying existing segments.

Sufficient data are necessary to support a change to the Aquatic Life use classification, particularly when the change is a downgrade from Cold to Warm. A Use Attainability Analysis (UAA) is required by EPA in these cases because the change from Cold to

Warm is associated with less stringent dissolved oxygen and is therefore a downgrade of the use (40 CFR 131.3(g), 40 CFR 1311.0(j)(2), 31.5, and 31.6(2)(b)).

Where sufficient data are not available to support a reclassification, the uncertainty concerning the classification of the segment must be identified in the Statement of Basis and purpose, and additional data should be collected.

1. **Warm to Cold:** A change in the Aquatic Life use classification from Warm to Cold must be supported by adequate data about the expected aquatic community as well as actual temperature data showing the attainability of cold-water temperature standards.
2. **Cold to Warm:** A change in the Aquatic Life use classification from Cold to Warm relaxes the standard for dissolved oxygen. Therefore, a UAA and sufficient supporting data are required. A change from a Cold to Warm use classification can only be adopted where both biological and temperature data support such a change. The thermal effects of both point and non-point sources also need to be addressed including the effects of diversions and water storage projects.

**a. Considerations and Data Sources**

The following information has been considered in temperature UAAs.

1. Thermal preference of the aquatic community including species expected to be present
2. Critical habitat for endangered fishes
3. Available water temperature data
4. Exemptions due to low-flow, air temperature, or adequate refuge (refuge applies to lakes only), or winter shoulder-season.
5. Flow removed by diversions
6. Precipitation
7. Elevation
8. Upstream reservoirs and their release structures (top or bottom release)
9. Land cover and land use
10. Natural hot springs

11. Point sources and non-point sources of anthropogenic thermal load

**b. Practical Effects of Changing from Cold to Warm Sub-classification**

Beyond the obvious change in temperature criteria, the practical effect of changing the Aquatic Life use classification from a cold to a warm sub-classification is that the numeric standards for dissolved oxygen are relaxed.

**i. Dissolved Oxygen:** The dissolved oxygen criterion is relaxed from 6.0 mg/L to the Aquatic Life Warm value of 5.0 mg/L, and the spawning dissolved oxygen standard of 7.0 mg/L does not apply.

**E. Development of Site-Specific Standards for Individual Segments**

As noted above, the numerical temperature table values will be used as the starting point for developing site-specific numerical standards for individual segments. Site-specific temperature standards may be appropriate where the ambient temperatures are adequate to protect the expected community, but the corresponding table value standard is not attained. Site-specific temperature standards may alter the seasons when summer and winter standards apply, and/or change the numeric values. Site-specific standards must be supported with adequate data to characterize the thermal regime, the aquatic community, and the extent of anthropogenic temperature alterations from both point and non-point sources (see subsection D.2.a above). The existing and expected aquatic life use must be protected by site-specific standards.

As outlined in the Basic Standards at 31.7(1)(b) Ambient Quality-Based or Site-Specific Criteria Based Standards may be adopted by the Commission. These situations include:

**1. Ambient Based Standards may be established where evidence has been presented.**

31.7(1)(b)(ii) Ambient Quality-Based Standards

For state surface waters where the natural or irreversible man-induced ambient water quality levels are higher than specific numeric levels contained in tables I, II, and III, but are determined adequate to protect classified uses, the Commission may adopt site-specific chronic standards equal to the 85th percentile of the available representative data. Acute standards shall be based on table values or site-specific-criteria-based standards, and in no case may an ambient chronic standard be more lenient than the acute standard.

**2. Site-Specific Alternatives that do not Require a Rulemaking Hearing**

The Commission adopted provisions at 31.14(14)(d) and (e) to allow alternative site-specific criteria to be developed at the time of permit development without the need for rulemaking. A site-specific recalculation following the procedures set forth in section XII of this document can be used to support variation from the

table value standards. When conducted as part of a permit renewal, the recalculated criterion should then be considered for formal adoption in the appropriate segment as part of the next basin review and rulemaking hearing.

## **XII. THE RECALCULATION PROCEDURE**

The Recalculation Procedure is intended to result in a site-specific temperature criterion that differs from the aquatic life table value criterion if justified by differences between the aquatic species that are expected to be present and those that were used in the derivation of the table value.

The phrase “expected to be present” includes the species, genera, families, orders, classes, and phyla that:

- 1) are usually present at the site.
- 2) are present at the site only seasonally due to migration.
- 3) are present intermittently because they periodically return to or extend their ranges into the site.
- 4) were present at the site in the past, are not currently present at the site due to degraded conditions, and are expected to return to the site when conditions improve.
- 5) are present in nearby bodies of water, are not currently present at the site due to degraded conditions, and are expected to be present at the site when conditions improve.

The taxa that are “expected to be present” cannot be determined merely by sampling downstream and/or upstream of the site at one point in time. Additionally, “expected to be present” does not include taxa that were once present at the site but cannot exist at the site now due to permanent physical alteration of the habitat at the site resulting from dams, etc.

The definition of the “site” can be extremely important when using the Recalculation Procedure. For example, the number of taxa that occur at the site will generally decrease as the size of the site decreases. Also, if the site is defined to be very small, the permit limit might be controlled by a criterion that applies outside (e.g., downstream of) the site.

The concept of the Recalculation Procedure is to create a dataset that is appropriate for deriving a site-specific criterion. Whenever a Recalculation is done, the literature for thermal preference and tolerances of the species expected to be present must be searched for new studies or studies that might have been missed when the Colorado Temperature Database was created. New studies that meet the guidelines outlined in sections IX and X of this document should be added to the Colorado Temperature Database, and this effort will help the keep the database current.

The acute and chronic species calculations, and community criteria calculations, must follow the guidelines outlined in section VIII of this document. This includes appropriate screening of data (appropriate acclimation temperature, removal of embryos, removal of field data, etc.) from the Colorado Temperature Database, unless an appropriate justification is provided.

- Correction of data that are in the statewide dataset.

- Addition of data to the statewide dataset.
- Deletion of data that are in the dataset.

Each step is discussed in more detail below.

#### **A. Corrections**

1. Only corrections approved by the Water Quality Control Division may be made.
2. The concept of “correction” includes removal of data that should not have been in the dataset in the first place. The concept of “correction” does not include removal of a datum from the dataset just because the quality of the datum is claimed to be suspect.
3. Two kinds of corrections are possible.
  - a. The first includes those corrections that are known to and have been approved by the Water Quality Control Division; a list of these will be available from the Water Quality Control Division.
  - b. The second includes those corrections that are submitted to the Water Quality Control Division for approval. If approved, these will be added to Water Quality Control Divisions list of approved corrections.
4. Selective corrections are not allowed. All corrections on Water Quality Control Divisions newest list must be made.

#### **B. Additions**

1. Only additions approved by the Water Quality Control Division may be made.
2. Two kinds of additions are possible:
  - a. The first includes those additions that are known to and have been approved by the Water Quality Control Division; a list of these will be available from the Water Quality Control Division.
  - b. The second includes those additions that are submitted to the Water Quality Control Division for approval. If approved, these will be added to Water Quality Control Divisions list of approved additions.
3. Selective additions are not allowed. All additions on Water Quality Control Divisions newest list must be made.

#### **C. The Deletion Process**

The basic principles are:

1. Additions or corrections must be made as per steps A and B above, before the deletion process is performed.
2. Selective deletions are not allowed.

If any species is to be deleted, the deletion process described below **must** be applied to all species in the statewide dataset, after any necessary corrections and additions have been made to the statewide dataset. The deletion process specifies which species **must** be deleted and which species **must not** be deleted. Use of the deletion process is optional, but no deletions are optional when the deletion process is used.

Comprehensive information **must** be available concerning what species occur at the site; a species cannot be deleted based on incomplete information concerning the species that do and do not satisfy the definition of “occur at the site”.