What does “impaired water quality” mean?

Squaw Creek Watershed Assessment

Many think only of unsafe drinking water for humans when they hear the term “water quality impairment.”

Others believe it means that surface water in lakes and streams is unsafe for swimming and other forms of human contact.

Some consider impact to all forms of life when they think of “water quality impairment,” including fish and microorganisms.

Water quality is the set of physical, chemical, and biological characteristics that allow the water body to perform its desired functions. “Impaired water quality” affects all organisms connected with water—plant, animal and/or human.