

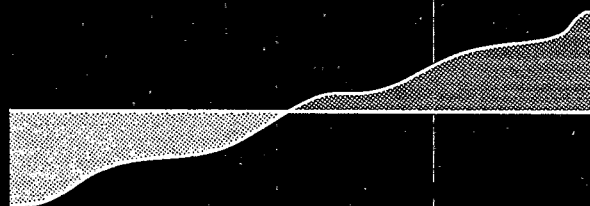
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June 1996



Watershed Approach Framework





UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

Dear Reader:

We are pleased to share with you the *Watershed Approach Framework*. This document was prepared by an interoffice team of Headquarters and Regional staff of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It has also been reviewed by many of our colleagues, particularly State and Tribal officials, and we appreciate their input.

We are issuing this document jointly to stress the importance of good coordination and cooperation across programs. The watershed approach is a form of community-based environmental protection using hydrologic boundaries to define the area of interest. As such, it is characterized by a geographic focus, an emphasis on building partnerships, and a reliance on sound scientific techniques and management processes. We believe the watershed approach can significantly improve water resource restoration, protection and maintenance and achieve lasting environmental results.

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Watershed Approach Framework

*People working together
to protect public health and the environment
—community by community,
watershed by watershed.*

*Carol M. Browner, Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
June 1996*

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Introduction

Environmental protection programs in the United States have successfully improved water quality during the last quarter century, yet, many challenges remain. The most recent national water quality inventory shows that, as of 1994, nearly 40 percent of surveyed waters in the US remain too polluted for fishing, swimming and other uses. The leading causes of impairment found in the survey include silt, sewage, disease-causing bacteria, fertilizer, toxic metals, oil and grease.

Many public and private organizations are joining forces and creating multidisciplinary and multijurisdictional partnerships to focus on these problems, community by community and watershed by watershed. These *watershed approaches* are likely to result in significant restoration, maintenance and protection of water resources in the United States. Supporting them is a high priority for EPA's national water program.

This publication explains EPA's vision for watershed approaches and builds upon the Office of Water *Watershed Protection Approach Framework*, endorsed by senior EPA managers in 1991. It emphasizes the role EPA envisions for states and tribes. It also reflects the high priority that individual Office of Water programs have put on developing and supporting comprehensive state and tribal watershed approach strategies that actively involve public and private interests at all levels to achieve environmental protection.

What is a Watershed Approach?

The watershed approach is a coordinating framework for environmental management that focuses public and private sector efforts to address the highest priority problems within hydrologically-defined geographic areas, taking into consideration both ground and surface water flow.

Guiding Principles

EPA supports watershed approaches that aim to prevent pollution, achieve and sustain environmental improvements and meet other goals important to the community. Although watershed approaches may vary in terms of specific objectives, priorities, elements, timing, and resources, all should be based on the following guiding principles.

- *Partnerships*—Those people most affected by management decisions are involved throughout and shape key decisions.

This ensures that environmental objectives are well integrated with those for economic stability and other social and cultural goals. It also provides that the people who depend upon the natural resources within the watersheds are well informed of and participate in planning and implementation activities.

- ***Geographic Focus***—Activities are directed within specific geographic areas, typically the areas that drain to surface water bodies or that recharge or overlay ground waters or a combination of both.
- ***Sound Management Techniques based on Strong Science and Data***—Collectively, watershed stakeholders employ sound scientific data, tools, and techniques in an iterative decision making process. This includes:
 - assessment and characterization of the natural resources and the communities that depend upon them;
 - goal setting and identification of environmental objectives based on the condition or vulnerability of resources and the needs of the aquatic ecosystem and the people within the community;
 - identification of priority problems;
 - development of specific management options and action plans;
 - implementation; and
 - evaluation of effectiveness and revision of plans, as needed.

Because stakeholders work together, actions are based upon shared information and a common understanding of the roles, priorities, and responsibilities of all involved parties. Concerns about environmental justice are addressed and, when possible, pollution prevention techniques are adopted. The iterative nature of the watershed approach encourages partners to set goals and targets and to make maximum progress based on available information while continuing analysis and verification in areas where information is incomplete.

Need for Watershed Approaches

Over the past 20 years, substantial reductions have been achieved in the discharge of pollutants into the nation's air, lakes, rivers, wetlands, estuaries, coastal waters, and ground water. These successes have been achieved primarily by controlling point sources of pollution and, in the case of ground water, preventing contamination from hazardous waste sites. While such sources continue to be an environmental threat, it is clear that potential causes of impairment of a waterbody are as varied as human activity itself. For example, besides discharges from industrial or municipal sources, our waters may be threatened by urban, agricultural, or other forms of polluted runoff; landscape modification; depleted or contaminated ground water; changes in flow; overharvesting of fish and

other organisms; introduction of exotic species; bioaccumulation of toxics; and deposition or recycling of pollutants between air, land and water.

The federal laws that address these problems have tended to focus on particular sources, pollutants, or water uses and have not resulted in an integrated environmental management approach. Consequently, significant gaps exist in our efforts to protect watersheds from the cumulative impacts of a multitude of activities. Existing air, waste and pesticide management, water pollution prevention and control programs and other related natural resource programs are, however, excellent foundations on which to build a watershed approach.

Benefits Derived from Taking a Watershed Approach

Operating and coordinating programs on a watershed basis makes good sense for environmental, financial, social, and administrative reasons. For example, by jointly reviewing the results of assessment efforts for drinking water protection, pollution control, fish and wildlife habitat protection and other aquatic resource protection programs, managers from all levels of government can better understand the cumulative impacts of various human activities and determine the most critical problems within each watershed. Using this information to set priorities for action allows public and private managers from all levels to allocate limited financial and human resources to address the most critical needs. Establishing environmental indicators helps guide activities toward solving those high priority problems and measuring success in making real world improvements rather than simply fulfilling programmatic requirements.

Besides driving results towards environmental benefits, the approach can result in cost savings by leveraging and building upon the financial resources and the willingness of the people with interests in the watershed to take action. Through improved communication and coordination the watershed approach can reduce costly duplication of efforts and conflicting actions. Regarding actions that require permits, specific actions taken within a watershed context (for example the establishment of pollutant trading schemes or wetlands mitigation banks and related streamlined permit review) enhances predictability that future actions will be permitted and reduces costs for the private sector. As a result, the watershed approach can help enhance local and regional economic viability in ways that are environmentally sound and consistent with watershed objectives.

Finally, the watershed approach strengthens teamwork between the public and private sectors at the federal, state, tribal and local levels to achieve the greatest environmental improvements with the resources available. This emphasis gives those people who depend on the aquatic resources for their health, livelihood or quality of life a meaningful role in the management of the resources. Through such active and broad involvement, the watershed approach can build a sense of community,

reduce conflicts, increase commitment to the actions necessary to meet societal goals and, ultimately, improve the likelihood of sustaining long-term environmental improvements.

Implementing the Guiding Principles through State and Tribal Watershed Approaches

From EPA's perspective, states and tribes are in a pivotal position because they implement many existing water and natural resource protection programs and they are situated well to coordinate among other levels of government (e.g., local, regional and federal). For these reasons, EPA places special emphasis on supporting our state and tribal partners in developing and implementing comprehensive watershed approaches. This emphasis should not be construed as a lack of support for the involvement of other parties in watershed management, especially local stakeholders. As stated in the guiding principles, partnerships that promote the active participation of concerned parties from all levels of government and from across the public and private sectors is essential to the watershed approach.

EPA recognizes that each state or tribe may approach watershed management differently. The agency will not prescribe their actions; rather it supports watershed approaches that are tailored to the needs of the jurisdictions.

The agency has both a national interest in and responsibility for supporting watershed approaches. The interest stems from the belief that the diverse sources of aquatic ecosystem impacts will best be brought under control through a combination of cooperative and mandatory measures tailored to the needs in specific watersheds with wholehearted support from watershed stakeholders. EPA's responsibility includes definition and ensured compliance with basic water programs; development of national standards and tools; funding; and national assessment of status and progress.

For the long term, EPA envisions locally-driven, watershed-based activities embedded in comprehensive state and tribal watershed approaches all over the United States. Based on observation of the development of such comprehensive approaches in several jurisdictions, there are four key elements of state and tribal watershed approaches. These reflect and provide the operating structure for these guiding principles described earlier. They are:

Stakeholder Involvement

(providing structure for the *Partnership* principle)

Geographic Management Units

(providing structure for the *Geographic Focus* principle)

Coordinated Management Activities

(providing structure for the *Sound Management* principle)

A Management Schedule

(providing further structure for the *Sound Management* principle)

The following describes in more detail how the key elements implement the guiding principles.

Stakeholder Involvement

Broad involvement is critical. In many cases, the solutions to natural resource problems depend on voluntary actions on the part of the people who live, work and play in the watershed. Besides improving coordination among their own agencies, the watershed approach calls upon states and tribes to fully engage local government entities, sources of watershed impacts, users of watershed resources, environmental groups, and the public in the watershed management process to help them better understand the problems, identify and buy into goals, select priorities, and choose and implement solutions.

States and tribes work with other partners on watershed management issues in geographically-based watershed "teams." As appropriate, partnerships include representatives from local, regional, state, tribal, and federal agencies, conservation districts, public interest groups, industries, academic institutions, private landowners, concerned citizens, and others. There are a great many watershed partnerships already in effect across the country. Ideally, states and tribes will commission or build on these. Some examples of partnerships that have been formed under existing programs are:

- Local Wellhead Protection Programs or other source water protection efforts, including cooperative efforts to meet requirements to avoid filtration under the Surface Water Treatment Rule.
- National Estuary Program Management Conferences.
- Clean Lakes Program management teams.
- Tributary teams in the Chesapeake Bay.
- Watershed alliances formed through conservation districts and under various state and federal programs, for example the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (P.L.83-566) and comprehensive resource management teams working on forestry issues.

Geographic Management Units

The entire jurisdiction is divided into geographic management units. Ideally, these units are determined on the basis of hydrologic connections, as described under the geographic focus principle. Other factors such as political boundaries and existing partnership program areas are often factored into decisions about geographic management units, as well.

The size of the management unit is an important consideration because, depending on scale different parties may take different roles. For example, for large river basins or lakes, state and tribal agencies are likely to lead watershed planning efforts, while local government, conservation districts, and watershed councils may take the lead in developing and implementing solutions in smaller watersheds. "Nesting" smaller watersheds areas (such as those designated as drinking water source water protection areas or special management areas for wetlands protection) within larger watershed or river basins allows those involved at every level to scale their efforts up or down to address specific concerns and still maintain consistency with related efforts.

Coordinated Management Activities

State and tribal agencies have responsibility for many of the management activities described in the guiding principles. Ideally, the various agencies with responsibilities for wetlands protection, drinking water source protection, waste management, point and nonpoint source pollution control, air pollution, pesticide management and other programs such as water supply, agriculture, navigation, and transportation (in any given jurisdiction, these might be several different agencies) would jointly compare their lists of high priority areas, meet with each other and other stakeholders, and look for opportunities to leverage their limited resources to meet common goals. Watershed approaches should not be viewed as an additional layer of oversight; rather watershed approaches should constitute improvements in coordination of current programs, processes and procedures to increase efficiency and efficacy.

Working together cooperatively, state and tribal programs can support and facilitate many of the management activities likely to be taken by watershed teams. The activities described below suggest some of the ways that EPA-related water programs can support watershed approaches. It is important to keep in mind that many other activities and programs, both public and private, at all levels, may need to be included in watershed planning and management.

1. *Assessment and Characterization of Aquatic Resources, Problems, their Causes and Sources*

Ideally, monitoring parameters would be determined by water quality standards and other watershed goals and indicators, which are specified according to the needs and conditions of the area and reflect Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act goals and build on the environmental indicators that EPA and its public and private partners have adopted.

The state or tribal monitoring program should have a multiyear strategy to portray existing information on physical, chemical, biological, and habitat conditions and comprehensively monitor waters. Ideally, the strategy should recognize that responsibilities can be shared by many stakeholders and that monitoring must be done to fulfill distinct purposes: characterizing the watershed; identifying and locating specific problems; and determining if actions are effective and goals are met. A strong monitoring program should include:

- An inventory of key existing information on resources, including priority ground water, sources of drinking water, habitat, wetlands and riparian acreage, function and/or restoration sites.
- A monitoring design that confirms or updates existing information or fills gaps and can report trends.
- Reference conditions for biological monitoring programs to provide baseline data for water quality assessments and development of biological and nutrient criteria.
- Data collected using comparable methods to allow aggregation of data at various scales and stored so as to be readily accessible to others (e.g., in EPA's database STORET).
- Geographic references (using Reach File 3) so that monitored waters can be mapped using a Geographical Information System (GIS), allowing information to be aggregated on a watershed basis.
- Key information on condition of waters (e.g., impaired, in need of special protection, endangered species present, threatened sources of drinking water) and causes of impairment are reported in the national water quality inventory (305(b) report).

- Collaborative efforts on existing and planned monitoring activities with other public and private institutions to share information when goals are similar.

2. *Goal Setting*

In the process of identifying goals, water quality standards provide a legal baseline or starting point. These goals clearly identify the uses to be made of the waters, for example the protection and propagation of a warm water fishery. Water quality standards also include the appropriate chemical, physical and biological criteria to characterize and protect the uses and an antidegradation policy to preserve the uses and water improvements attained in the waters of their watersheds. As an outcome of watershed planning processes, a state or tribe may also adopt new or revised water quality standards for the waters within a watershed to reflect agreements made by the stakeholders to meet the watershed goals (this would likely take place as part of the triennial review process required by law). Actions by states and tribes that support watershed efforts include:

- Reviewing, and if appropriate, revising water quality standards within the watershed framework, consulting the other stakeholders involved in the watershed.
- Adopting precisely defined uses given the chemical, physical and biological characteristics of the waterbody.
- Expanding the suite of tools applicable to the development and implementation of their water quality standards and management programs. The expanded suite should include tools to address multiple stressors and their cumulative impacts, including criteria to protect human health, aquatic life, wildlife and sediment dwelling organisms; methodologies for sediment and whole effluent toxicity testing; and assessment methods for establishing Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) or waste load allocations, and evaluating ecological risk, nutrient enrichment and habitat.

3. *Problem Prioritization and Resource Targeting*

Staff in the various water-related programs in the state or tribe should work with other stakeholders to jointly set priorities for the particular suite of water resources concerns present in each identified management unit. Deliberations should consider:

- Drinking water source protection for both ground and surface water sources;
- Wetlands and riparian area protection and other ecological values;
- Nonpoint source pollution control;
- Point source pollution control;
- Living resource needs; and
- Other issues, such as waste and pesticide management, air pollution affects on water resources, and water supply, as appropriate.

The watershed approach should take into consideration the findings of and priorities established under preexisting initiatives, such as the Comprehensive State Ground Water Protection Program (CSGWPP), Wellhead Protection Program, State Wetlands Conservation Plans, NPDES watershed or basin strategy, National Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan, or Clean Lakes projects. In addition, states and tribes should take into consideration the goals and plans of relevant large-scale projects, such as the Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes, and Gulf of Mexico programs and the Northwest Forest Plan and Everglades initiative. These projects may provide significant opportunities for "nesting" smaller projects within larger frameworks, yielding benefits to both.

The composition of watershed partnerships should reflect the agreed upon priorities for the watershed areas. Similarly, Clean Water Act funds, both grants and loans, should be applied to the development and implementation of watershed plans.

4. *Management Option Development and Watershed (or Basin) Plans*

Each watershed partnership should develop management options and set forth a watershed or basin management plan that should:

- Establish environmental objectives that are consistent with all applicable state, tribal, and federal statutes and regulations, including water quality standards and drinking water maximum contamination levels and health advisories. The environmental objectives should reflect the needs and concerns of the watershed stakeholders and thus may include objectives unrelated to EPA programs.

- Identify environmental indicators compatible or complementary to national indicators that can be used to monitor and report on attainment of the environmental objectives. (In June 1996 the agency issued *Environmental Indicators of Water Quality in the United States* EPA 841-R-96-002.)
- Identify specific implementation actions, including voluntary, mandatory, and educational efforts, that will attain and maintain the goals.
- Set forth milestones, assign responsibility, specify who will implement actions, and identify existing and potential sources of funding for implementation.

5. *Implementation*

Due to the participatory nature of watershed approaches, responsibility for implementation of watershed plans will fall to various parties relative to their particular interests, expertise and authorities. To the maximum extent possible, state and tribal water-related programs should support the implementation of watershed plans through their actions. They should consider the full range of tools available to them in programs as diverse as water quality protection, pesticide management, waste management, air pollution control, as well as natural resources protection, agriculture programs, water supply, transportation and other related programs. For example, under water quality and natural resource protection programs they may:

- Support watershed approaches to water quality permitting, nonpoint source pollution control, habitat protection and other water resource protection and restoration activities using Total Maximum Daily Load analyses.
- Issue NPDES permits in accordance with the state or tribal watershed management schedule.
- Tailor their Clean Water Act §319 nonpoint source management program to respond to watershed needs and ground water connections.
- Direct activities in the State Wetland Conservation Plan toward reducing wetland impacts from land and water-based activities.
- Integrate federal, state and/or local wetland permit programs with individual watershed plans that contain adequate wetland protection provisions.

- Promote the establishment of mitigation banks by providing funding for bank sponsors, identifying and prioritizing potential bank sites, and providing appropriate direction.
- Use their watershed approach to target overall source water protection areas and approved Wellhead Protection Program protection areas as high priority for various federal and state programs.
- Direct federal and state activities toward protection of high priority ground water (e.g., wellhead protection areas or other areas designated under endorsed Comprehensive State Ground Water Protection Program).
- Develop or use approved program under primacy for Phase I/II/V National Primacy Drinking Water Regulations for granting monitoring waivers under Public Water System Supervision program.
- As authorized, monitor, verify implementation, and, when necessary, enforce management actions.

6. *Monitoring and Evaluation*

To evaluate the effectiveness, the watershed management cycle should include monitoring to ascertain both the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of implemented watershed plans. Progress should be reported and results of monitoring help guide decisions about continued implementation. See Assessment and Characterization of Aquatic Resources, Problems, their Causes and Sources, above.

Management Schedule

A schedule for carrying out coordinated management activities within each of the management units helps organize the work states and tribes need to undertake. The schedule would lay out a long-term program for maintaining, restoring, and protecting water resources and provide other interested parties an opportunity to plan for their involvement. To most effectively create an orderly system for focusing and coordinating watershed management activities on a continuous basis, the schedule should contain two features:

- A sequence for addressing watersheds that balances workloads from year to year; and

- A specified length of time planned for each major management activity (e.g. assessment, management option development, implementation).

The schedule should reflect the magnitude of activities to be carried out within any particular watershed or basin, which depends largely on the range and severity of problems found within that management unit. For example, some watersheds may require minimal actions to maintain high environmental quality, whereas others may require substantial effort to restore environmental quality.

Reorganizing workloads to take a watershed approach may take a considerable amount of time. During the early phases of reorientation (before the entire jurisdiction is covered by the watershed schedule), existing program activities to address high priority restoration, remediation and/or protection concerns, such as wellhead protection, may need to proceed in some places independently of the watershed schedule. Ideally, however, over time all relevant programs would be carried out within a jurisdiction-wide watershed approach.

EPA Support to Facilitate Watershed Approaches

EPA's National Water Program has examined its work in order to identify ways that the agency can better support watershed approaches. Besides the provision of basic national programs upon which watershed approaches are built, specific operational changes have been suggested. These include reduced water quality reporting requirements, priority consideration for Clean Water Act grants for watershed activities, use of funds under the Safe Drinking Water Act for source water protection, simplified wetlands permitting, allowances for NPDES permitting backlogs, longer cycles for reviewing and, if appropriate, revising water quality standards, reduced monitoring under the Safe Drinking Water Act, TMDL assistance, and facilitated development of wetlands mitigation banks and effluent trading. These programmatic changes are described in more detail in another EPA publication entitled, *Why Watersheds?* (EPA800-F-96-001)

The Office of Water offers assistance to help water quality managers and staff throughout the public and private sectors develop and implement watershed approaches. The four main areas covered include watershed management training, statewide watershed approach facilitation, watershed program scoping, and technical analysis assistance. Training and facilitation have been the most actively requested services of the watershed assistance program.

Watershed management training is available through the *Watershed Academy*, which offers a set of core courses and related refer-

ence materials about basic watershed management principles and techniques as well as contact information on more specialized and advanced courses. The core courses address watershed management fundamentals, watershed tools, the statewide approach to watershed management, and an executive overview course. During 1995, the two-day Statewide Watershed Management Course was offered in five locations to over 300 people. Completion of the other core courses is planned for late 1996. Although EPA itself offers only a few courses, dozens of watershed training opportunities exist. The Watershed Academy will continually update its *Catalogue of Watershed Training Opportunities* (available on internet) to spread information about watershed-oriented training courses offered by other local, state and federal agencies and private organizations. Participation in an interagency watershed training workgroup will be another source of joint planning, shared training materials and expertise.

Watershed approach facilitation is generally provided to states and tribes that intend to reorient their water resources management programs along watershed lines. Facilitation involves several onsite working meetings with water program managers and decision makers to help them develop a transition plan, schedule, and comprehensive organizational framework based on major river basins and their component watersheds. Twelve states contacted EPA for some form of facilitation assistance during 1995, and several have completed significant reorientations of their programs to implement a watershed approach.

In addition to training and facilitation, the Office of Water offers assistance in watershed program scoping and technical analysis to states and tribes. Scoping projects are preliminary to full-scale reorientation and involve one or two meetings with managers to determine what form a watershed approach might take, the effort involved, and the next steps needed. Technical analysis projects focus on scientific, economic or programmatic analysis as related to specific watershed management issues.

For information on the Watershed Academy, contact Doug Norton at 202-260-7017. For information on the statewide watershed management course, contact Greg Currey at 202-260-1718. For information on watershed facilitation, scoping, or technical analysis assistance, contact either Doug or Deborah Nagle at 202-260-2656.

Several EPA documents may be of particular interest.

Watershed Protection: A Statewide Approach (EPA841-R-95-004)

Watershed Protection: A Project Focus (EPA841-R-95-003)

The Watershed Protection Approach 1993-94 Activity Report (EPA840-S-94-001)

Watershed '93: A National Conference on Watershed Management (Proceedings) (EPA840-R-94-002)

Why Watersheds? (EPA800-F-96-001)

Catalogue of Watershed Training Opportunities (available on internet)

Watershed Tools Directory (EPA841-B-95-005)

These documents are or soon will be available on the internet at URL:<http://www.epa.gov/OWOW>. Printed copies of the final (non-draft) documents can be obtained by telephone at 513-489-8190, by fax at 513-489-8695, or by written request to NCEPI, 11029 Kenwood Road, Building 5, Cincinnati, OH 45242.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Watershed Approach

How can the watershed approach address both ground water and surface water protection?

When delineating geographic management units, boundaries should be constructed to accommodate hydrologic connections and processes and address the priority problems at hand. So, particular management areas may vary depending on the priority problems to be addressed. For example, when ground water contributes significantly to surface water flow, the management unit should include the ground water recharge area. When the vulnerability of drinking water to contamination is of primary concern, then the drinking water source (e.g., reservoir or well-head protection area) should be the area upon which attention is focused. When the protection of an aquifer is of primary concern, the management area should include the overlaying or recharging area and recognize impacts upon surface water. Interesting research is now underway in the State of Florida to delineate hydrogeological watersheds that accurately depict ground and surface water connections. Similarly, the US Army Corps of Engineers has developed new techniques for hydrogeomorphic analyses related to wetlands.

How does the watershed approach relate to other programs with similar characteristics, such as the National Estuary Program and Source Water Protection? And, how does the NPDES watershed strategy relate to the watershed approach?

States and tribes may want to build on the successes of geographically-focused programs and increasingly integrate assessments, sort out and

establish joint priorities, and coordinate actions among programs while making a transition to the watershed approach. Whether a jurisdiction starts with a source water protection program like Wellhead Protection, a Wetlands Conservation Plan, a National Estuary Program, a NPDES watershed strategy or other water resource, place-based strategy, EPA will support them in moving to an even more comprehensive approach to protecting water resources. These more targeted programs can provide the community roots for broader watershed approaches. Ultimately, we hope to see comprehensive, jurisdiction-wide, and when appropriate cross-jurisdiction, watershed approaches that involve all appropriate agency staff working with local stakeholders while setting goals, establishing priorities, and implementing integrated and effective solutions.

What is the relationship between the watershed approach and community-based environmental protection?

Community-based environmental protection is an iterative approach in which diverse stakeholders strive to achieve environmental objectives. Typically it includes:

- Adoption of local environmental goals compatible with economic sustainability;
- Characterization of environmental problems and solutions; and
- Implementation of solutions that are coordinated and tailored to the goals and needs of the community.

The watershed approach is community-based environmental protection using watershed or hydrologic boundaries to define the problem area. In fact, the momentum and success of the watershed approach and its "predecessors," the National Estuary Program, Great Water Bodies programs, and the Clean Lakes Program, strongly influenced the development of EPA's community-based environmental protection approach.

How does the watershed approach relate to the National Environmental Performance Partnership System and Performance Partnerships Grants?

States that choose to adopt the National Environmental Performance Partnership System could choose to set water quality protection goals and priorities and organize their work on a watershed basis. Watershed plans could be incorporated or referenced in the required Environmental Performance Agreements.

Through Performance Partnership Grants (PPGs), states and tribes can combine funding from eligible grants to target high priority problems and address multimedia problems within their watersheds. States and tribes that combine categorical grants into PPGs must continue to address the core program requirements which those grants are meant to support. A final approved PPG will be the result of negotiations between the state or tribe and its EPA Regional office.