



## 26 Wetlands and Watersheds

*Wetlands are important elements of a watershed because they serve as the link between land and water resources. Wetlands protection programs are most effective when coordinated with other surface and ground-water protection programs and with other resource management programs, such as flood control, water supply, protection of fish and wildlife, recreation, control of stormwater, and nonpoint source pollution. This fact sheet discusses the "why" and "how" of integrating these programs.*

### Why Use an Integrated Approach?

The quality of the Nation's wetlands and other water resources is directly linked to the quality of the environment surrounding these waters. However, resource protection programs have historically focused on single goals or a small set of goals. These programs have succeeded in identifying and controlling, to some degree, the larger point sources of pollution. Now it's time to use an approach that addresses the interconnections between water resources and the land, air, and water environment surrounding the resources.

### What's a Watershed?

A watershed, also called a drainage basin, is the area in which all water, sediments, and dissolved materials flow or drain from the land into a common river, lake, ocean, or other body of water.

A watershed-based approach to water and wetlands protection considers the whole system, including other resource management programs that address land, air, and water, to successfully manage problems for a given aquatic resource.

The watershed approach thus includes not only the water resource, but also the surrounding land from which the water drains. This area can be as large as the Mississippi River drainage basin or as small as a back yard.

### How Does EPA Encourage an Integrated Approach?

EPA's Office of Water is actively pursuing a Watershed Protection Approach within EPA and with other agencies. EPA's Wetlands Division incorporates a watershed approach in much of its work with other agencies, States, and organizations. Current activities include the following:

- developing guidance linking wetlands protection programs to watershed planning efforts
- funding State watershed projects through State Wetland Protection Grants
- integrating a watershed approach into Federal floodplain management activities
- supporting a series of national and regional meetings on wetlands and regional watershed planning.

### W A T E R S H E D



• An Integrated, Holistic Approach •

For more information, contact the EPA Wetlands Information Hotline at 1-800-832-7828 (contractor operated).



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