



Office of Wetlands, Oceans & Watersheds

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

December 1991

A Note from Bob Wayland

Our new Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds (OWOW) inherited responsibilities for a number of diverse but interrelated program areas: nonpoint source pollution; coastal, marine, and wetlands protection; and key surface water monitoring and water quality assessment activities. While it will be a challenge to continue meeting the separate program goals established by our predecessors, I believe we will have succeeded only if we make substantial progress in advancing EPA's new agenda for ecological risk management and habitat protection.

And, I believe we are most likely to make progress on this broader mandate by focusing and integrating our efforts on a watershed basis. It was very gratifying to see participants at our national meeting in Charlottesville begin to rally around the watershed approach as a way to advance multiple program objectives with a new synergy.

Another ingredient to our success will be developing a customer focus. Our survey of how well Headquarters is supplying services to the Regions and our meeting in Charlottesville took us a long step in that direction. We are following through (see "The Check is in the Mail"). At Headquarters, we are now engaged in a structured dialogue with "customers" among the broad community of State and local government organizations, environmental groups, and the regulated sector—especially in agriculture.

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WPA Gains Momentum

Thanks to support from all Regions and Office of Water (OW) offices, we have moved closer to meeting our short-term goals for the Watershed Protection Approach (WPA). The Watershed Protection Projects proposed for implementation in FY92 and the criteria for making the selections clearly demonstrate that the Regions, States, and other Federal agencies have experience and expertise in this approach and are, in fact, already using it in selected watersheds. With the signing of the WPA Framework in October by all four OW office directors, all OW offices have joined the effort to look for integrated methods to address water quality in our nation's watersheds. OWOW is well along in the development of a "marketing kit" for use in promoting the WPA with State, local, public and private stakeholders. On December 13, representatives from all four OW offices and the Regions met to review our accomplishments, thus far, and plan for long-term implementation of watershed protection. Contact: Janet Pawlukiewicz (FTS) 260-7166.

"The Check's in the Mail"

In response to the results of our customer survey and follow-up discussion at the OWOW National Program Meeting, we are taking steps to improve the process used to allocate funds to OWOW's Regional programs. At the Water Management Division Director's meeting held during the week of November 18, we distributed a summary of the allocation process for all major OWOW line items involving the distribution of Regional funds from Headquarters. The summary noted where the process has been improved between FY91 and FY92. It also presented a preliminary matrix of all Headquarter and Regional allocations in an effort to convey the overall funding picture to the Regions as early as possible. During FY92, we plan to work with the Regions to further refine the process and implement the changes for FY93. Contact: Bernie Mason (FTS) 260-8580.

Wetlands Action Strategy Update

With continuing support from the Regions, we are making steady progress toward meeting our goals and objectives for the Wetlands Action Strategy. Wetland Action Plans for implementation in FY92 are being submitted by the Regions. These plans are being developed for the priority Regional "Hot Spots"—Western New York; Eastern Shore of Maryland; Tidewater Virginia; Coastal Georgia; Lower Mississippi River Valley; Louisiana; Irrigated Valleys of the Mountain West; and the North Slope of Alaska. In addition, Headquarters staff are working on several fronts related to State 404 assumption and increasing the States' role in wetlands protection.

Through these and other efforts we hope to dispel some of the antagonism to wetlands protection reflected in the press and in legislative proposals to curtail EPA's wetlands programs. Contact: Glenn Eugster (FTS) 260-6045.

Congressional Wetlands Hearings

House and Senate Subcommittee hearings on wetland issues have provided a forum for us to:

- describe the importance of wetlands;
- acknowledge legitimate concerns about the Section 404 program and efforts to address them;
- refute exaggerated or erroneous charges about Section 404; and
- describe important non-regulatory efforts to enhance wetlands protection.

On October 16, Bob Wayland testified before the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and Administrator William Reilly testified before the House Public Works and Transportation Subcommittee on Water Resources on October 22. The hearings covered a wide array of issues including the proposed revisions to the Federal delineation manual, mitigation banking, classification schemes and improving the permitting process. The subcommittees' members were particularly concerned with the need to address the "takings" issue. Contact: Glenn Eugster (FTS) 260-6045.

EPA Staff Serve As Citizen Monitors

In celebration of "Coastweeks," more than 60 EPA Headquarters volunteers became citizen monitors by helping to collect and catalog trash found along the beach at the Delaware Seashore State Park on Saturday, September 21. For the past four years, the former Office of Marine and Estuarine Protection and current OWOW have provided funding to the Center for Marine Conservation (CMC) to coordinate cleanups along our nation's beaches during "Coastweeks." Last year, a total of 108,749 volunteers collected 2,645,283 pounds of trash along approximately 3,700 miles of coastal area. Contact: Marcy O'Dell (FTS) 260-1904.

Recognizing the tremendous potential of these volunteer efforts in collecting data for future trend assessments, OWOW, along with the Izaak Walton League, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and Clean Water Action, is sponsoring the "Third National Volunteer Water Monitoring Conference" in Annapolis, Maryland from March 29-April 2. The conference will teach a broad array of stakeholders how to develop and implement their own citizen monitoring programs. Contact: Alice Mayo at (FTS) 260-7018.

WQ Data Systems to Get "Face Lift"

More than 125 users of STORET and other EPA water quality data systems met with staff from the Assessment and Watershed Protection Division and Office of Information Resources Management (OIRM) staff, in Dallas, September 11-13, to discuss modernizing the systems. As recommended at the conference, we are assembling teams of experts to address issues such as quality assurance and quality control, communications, data standards and in-house software files. Many thanks to all who continue to support this effort. A synopsis of the symposium is available by contacting Robert King at (FTS) 260-7028.

What is the Future for the National Estuary Program ?

The Oceans and Coastal Protection Division has taken a number of steps to look at the future of the National Estuary Program (NEP). A grant has been provided to the Urban Institute to develop and pilot test methods to aid EPA and the States in defining and assessing progress in the NEP. State, local, and other Federal agencies will be involved in the development of these methods. The assessment will be useful for determining successes and shortcomings, adjusting the program where needed, and providing required reports to Congress. It should substantially enhance our ability to implement resource-based, multi-jurisdictional efforts in the future.

We have in hand three "unsolicited" nominations for additional estuaries to be designated and several more are rumored to be in preparation. NEPs which have completed, or will soon complete, their Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs) are seeking continued technical and financial support. Can we meet all these expectations? How can we best protect coastal areas which are not designated estuaries?

Exploring these questions, we prepared and distributed an issue paper on the NEP, based on discussions at the OWOW National Program Meeting. The issues addressed include: EPA's role in oversight and management of the CCMPs once they have been approved; whether or not new NEPs should be recognized and supported; and the extent to which EPA should contribute to the implementation of actions recommended in the CCMPs. This paper was discussed at the November Water Management Division Director's meeting and at a meeting of the NEP Coordinators December 10-12. We hope to obtain decisions from Agency management by early in 1992. Contact: Mark Curran (FTS) 260-8483.

"Quarterly Highlights" is prepared by the Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds (OWOW). Its purpose is to share information with our Headquarters and Regional counterparts on major events that occurred during the past quarter, to provide an update on special topics, and to advise you of key personnel changes and upcoming activities. Any questions or suggestions concerning "Quarterly Highlights" should be directed to Paula Monroe of OWOW at (FTS) 260-6582.

Extended Comment Period for Wetlands Manual

The comment period for the proposed *Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands* has been extended to January 21, 1992. This action was taken in order to provide concurrent review of the proposed Federal Manual and the proposed rule making, which was published in the Federal Register on December 19, 1991. The proposed rule would codify some parts of the proposed Federal Manual, specifically those dealing with the three criteria (i.e., hydrology, soils, and vegetation), the indicators of these criteria, exceptions, problem areas, and disturbed areas. The Federal agencies involved have agreed that, although the former comment period on the proposed Federal Manual ended on December 15 and announcement of the extended comment period was not published until December 19, all comments received by January 21 will be accepted. Contact: Mike Fritz (FTS) 260-6013.

Reorganization of OCPD

Just in case you haven't heard, effective October 17, the Oceans and Coastal Protection Division was reorganized to better implement existing resources and to create a balance of functions within the Division. Under the new organization, the Division has three Branches: Coastal Technology Branch, Karen Klima, Chief; Marine Pollution Control Branch, John Lishman, Chief; and Coastal Management Branch, Mark Curran, Chief.



"Note" Continued

Should we consider those we regulate, or whose behavior we want to change, "customers?" At a recent meeting, Jim McCormick gave several Headquarters managers a new perspective on supplier/customer relationships by telling a story at my expense. He told the group I'd been caught speeding and asked them how I, as a customer of law enforcement, could get maximum satisfaction in this unhappy circumstance. They suggested, "A courteous trooper...a quick transaction so I could be on my way promptly (at a safe speed)...a clear explanation of why I was apprehended and the consequences."

I found this an instructive perspective--one we will consider as we become more sensitive to our customer's needs--whether our customers be the Regions, the States, sister offices, or "XYZ Company permit applicants."