



QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

April 1992

A Note From Dave Davis

When Bob and I took over the leadership of OWOW a year ago, we often said that we felt that the most challenging aspect of our new job was to make OWOW more the sum of its (programmatic) parts. We have tackled that challenge in two major areas — watershed protection and habitat protection. For this quarters' Highlights, I'd like to bring you up to date on the second. Habitat protection — that is, the protection of the physical and functional integrity of natural communities — is certainly an intrinsic element of many of OWOW's programs, notably wetlands and coastal/estuarine protection. Moreover, OWOW doesn't have a sole patent on habitat protection, as several other Agency programs have important roles in this area; for example, the RCRA and CERCLA programs, NEPA review activities, and pesticides application regulations. However, as an Agency colleague recently put it, "OWOW seems to be the principle keeper of the flame" in habitat protection, especially within the Office of Water.

We in OWOW are both pleased and humbled by this responsibility because we view habitat protection as one of EPA's greatest unmet challenges — a view strongly reinforced by the Science Advisory Board. For that reason, OWOW gladly accepted a leadership role in the Agency's Habitat Cluster, one of EPA's handful of major cross-cutting cluster efforts. Under

Continued on Page 3—Note

National Meeting to Highlight Water Pollution Control Trading

The Assessment and Watershed Protection Division (AWPD), in conjunction with the Office of Water, is sponsoring a two-day national meeting to promote trading as a part of Federal, State, and local water quality programs. The meeting has several objectives, including: (1) broadening the general understanding of point and nonpoint source pollution trading and promoting its acceptance as an integral component of water quality programs; (2) identifying programmatic, technical, and legislative factors which facilitate or discourage trading; (3) developing cooperative action plans to address program, technical, and legislative barriers; (4) identifying specific waterbodies which could serve as pilot opportunities for trading; and (5) developing recommendations for supportive activities by EPA, including guidance, revised policies, regulations, or legislative recommendations.

The meeting, scheduled for April 27 and 28 in Durham, North Carolina, is being planned in connection with the President's 90-Day Moratorium which called for Federal Agencies to identify and explore available means for providing regulatory relief. Trading is one of the more innovative, cost-effective opportunities for realizing water quality improvements. For example, North Carolina is adopting a trading scheme as the least-cost approach to meeting nutrient reduction targets within the 5,400 square mile Tar-Pamlico river basin. Instead of achieving reductions through expensive wastewater facility upgrades, the plan calls for implementation of less expensive nonpoint source controls, particularly within the agricultural community. The scheme also allows for trades between point sources should such trades become economically attractive. While the trading scheme has not yet been implemented, the administrative and institutional framework to allow such action is in place, and represents a model for managers in other areas interested in pursuing a similar approach.

Continued on Page 3—Trading

Total Quality Management Projects Underway in OWOW

Two actions have taken place during this quarter to help move OWOW towards total quality management (TQM). First, a TQM training session was held in February for all OWOW Branch Chiefs and Deputy Division Directors. Under Louise Wise's and Deve Barnes' tutelage, the enthusiastic pupils launched Quality Action Teams (QAT) to improve three areas within OWOW: the correspondance system, employee awards, and training opportunities.

In addition, an employee survey was conducted that also helped to identify areas where improvements are needed. The OWOW management team met in March to discuss how to respond to the concerns that were raised in the survey, and as a result, several actions are underway to improve "communications" within and among the three divisions. The survey results highlighted a tendency that is common in a busy organization, and that is to become so engrossed in one's own program agenda, that we forget to look around and see what is happening in other areas. A significant barrier to improving teamwork and communications within OWOW will be eliminated this summer with the consolidation of all staff in a single location, the Fairchild Building at 499 South Capitol Street. Currently, OWOW staff is divided between the Fairchild location and the Waterside Mall location. A QAT under Geoff Grubbs' direction is hoping to make this move as smooth and successful as possible.

The Latest on the Watershed Protection Approach

OWOW is hosting an Interagency Watershed Work Group consisting of representatives from several federal agencies, including the Soil Conservation Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Geological Survey, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Corps of Engineers, Office of Management and Budget, and Council on Environmental Quality. The Work Group was established to consider options for promoting watershed approaches in the upcoming Clean Water Act reauthorization; however,

the meetings will also serve as a forum for information exchange on how federal agencies are supporting and encouraging watershed approaches.

A video teleconference was held on March 16 between Headquarters WPA team members and the Regional "champions" and staff working on watershed projects. During the two hour exchange, the purpose and structure of the four headquarters teams were presented to the Regions, and the Regions provided an update on how their watershed efforts are progressing. These teleconferences will be held quarterly to keep everyone informed and "tuned in" to the latest on WPA.

Finally, the WPA is being featured at two national meetings this Spring. A panel discussion highlighting the WPA was conducted at the Coastal Society Meeting in Washington in April. In addition, the WPA will be featured in an EPA exhibit at the United Nation's Conference on Environment and Development which is scheduled for June in Brazil. This meeting is an international event that is expected to attract thousands of people from around the globe, including many heads of state. Contact: Janet Pawlukiewicz, (FTS) 260-9194.

EPA To Consider New Nominations for National Estuary Program

The Oceans and Coastal Protection Division met with the Administrator in February to discuss several issues related to the future of the National Estuary Program (NEP), in particular, "Should new management conferences be convened". At that meeting, it was decided that additional estuaries should be included in the program, and staff in the Regions and Headquarters are busily answering questions of prospective entrants. To date, 17 national estuary programs have been designated around the country.

EPA received three unsolicited nominations to the NEP in 1991 — Peconic Bay in New York, Mobile Bay in Alabama, and Morro Bay in California. Congress indicated that the Peconic Bay

nomination be given priority consideration in Title II of the Ocean Dumping Ban Act of 1988. The Administrator decided that EPA would review this application immediately, and should the nomination meet the evaluation criteria, be added to the NEP in FY 1992. On February 20, a notice soliciting additional nominations was published in the Federal Register. Up to three estuaries nominated in response to this call will be added to the NEP in FY 93. All new estuary programs will follow a streamlined approach based on lessons learned from the existing programs as well as progress already made in the estuaries to characterize their environmental problems and identify corrective actions. This approach will include faster development and implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. Consideration will be given also to those estuaries that have a pre-existing management structure. Contact: Mark Curran, (FTS) 260-6502.

Federal and State Agencies Join Together to Improve Monitoring

Several federal and state agencies that collect and rely upon water quality and water resource monitoring data for decision-making have joined together to promote more effective collection, presentation, and interpretation of this information. EPA and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have established an Intergovernmental Task Force on Monitoring (ITFM), and the first meeting was held on January 29 and 30 in Arlington, Virginia. In addition to EPA and USGS, other representatives include: Department of Energy, Office of Management and Budget, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Agriculture, seven states, and an interstate commission providing a broad geographic representation.

At the first meeting, the task force agreed that a framework is needed to integrate monitoring efforts, use resources more effectively, and obtain comparable data and consistent reporting of status and trends of water quality. To accomplish its mission, four task force subgroups were established — Intergovernmental Framework, Environmen-

Continued on Page 4 - Monitoring

In addition to formal presentations from an array of experts and small problem solving groups, the meeting will feature a field trip to the Tar-Pamlico basin to examine first hand the scheme that is being developed. Contact: Don Brady, (FTS) 260-5392.

Note—Continued from Page 1

the leadership of Bruce Newton, Chief of OWOW's Watershed Branch, and Tim Barry, Chief of the Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation's (OPPE) Science Policy Branch, the Habitat Cluster has brought together forty to fifty EPA staff persons representing key Headquarters offices and several Regions. The Cluster has worked since last fall to formulate a strategic agenda for EPA, and has recently taken time out to extract a series of shorter-term initiatives designed to capitalize on the high level of support of the Reilly top management team. Collectively, these initiatives if implemented vigorously would both accomplish a variety of needed actions and set in motion a series of institutional changes that would afford habitat protection greater priority vis-a-vis more classical chemical pollution control. Recently, I have become more directly involved in the Cluster's work through establishment of an executive management committee on which I serve along with Mike Slimak of the Office of Research and Development and Wendy Cleland-Hamnet of OPPE.

In a separate, but related effort, OWOW is playing a leadership role in the new Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program, an international public-private partnership aimed at helping to ensure the survival of some of the Western Hemisphere's most fascinating and important, yet most imperiled bird populations.



I represent EPA on the federal interagency steering committee for this program. A fact sheet on the program is enclosed for your future information. Over time, we hope to build upon the expertise and networks we have developed in these efforts. Our goal is to continue to seek and exploit opportunities for greater habitat protection and to "mainstream" those activities and objectives into EPA's basic institutional fabric. We appreciate the assistance and support we've received from all of our colleagues in D.C. and across the country, and look forward to continuing efforts in this area with you.

tal Indicators, Data Collection Methods, and Information Sharing. For the first year, the ITFM plans to submit a report to OMB by December on recommendations for needed improvements in water-quality monitoring activities. Further recommendations and implementation activities will follow, with project completion scheduled for December 1994. The next meeting of the ITFM is scheduled for May 20 - 21 in Washington, D.C. Contact: Elizabeth Jester, (FTS) 260-7062.

Study Examines State Assumption of Section 404 Permitting Program

The President's August 9, 1991 announcement on improving wetlands protection and ensuring "no net loss" indicated that the Administration would approve State programs capable of achieving an equivalent level of wetlands protection and benefit as the Federal program, and committed to revising the regulations on State assumption of the Section 404 program. In preparation for the revision, the EPA Program Evaluation Division, at the request of the Wetlands Division, recently completed a draft report that describes why more States have not assumed responsibility for the program. Specifically, the study was designed to identify the most significant obstacles to State assumption. Interviews were conducted in 13 states, at various levels of management; at three District Corps of Engineer offices; with representatives from the National Governors Association and the Association of State Wetlands Managers; and with EPA Headquarter and Regional staffs.

The results indicated that while the States favor assuming responsibility for the Section 404 program, they will not pursue assumption unless a number of existing obstacles are removed. The cost of running an assumed program was identified as the single, most significant obstacle for most States. The States believe that if EPA wants them to assume the program, Federal funding should be made available. Lack of political support within State boundaries and public appreciation for the value of wetlands were identified as other major obstacles. Also, the States expressed a

desire for flexibility in the design of an assumed program. As long as the intent is the same, State programs should not have to mirror the Federal program. The draft report was released for review on March 17. Wetlands Division staff are using the document in discussions with States, environmental groups, EPA Regions, and others to identify alternatives for eliminating the impediments to State assumption. The Wetlands Division is also researching performance-based approaches to natural resource protection programs. Additional information is expected to be available in July. Contact: Jeanne Melanson, (FTS) 260-9043.

Guidance Provided for Near Coastal Waters Program

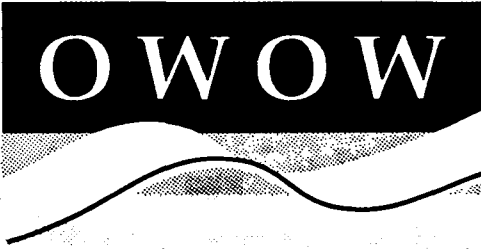
A final guidance document for managing Near Coastal Waters (NCW) programs was transmitted to the Regions in March along with funds to support NCW activities in FY 1992. The NCW program, in keeping with the Watershed Protection Approach, is based on identifying priority areas and integrating efforts to protect them. The purpose of the guidance document is to help provide a framework for coastal decision-making, and it includes a



screening process to help Regions determine how to assess and select geographic areas for priority management action, and how to identify the problems and issues within those targeted areas that are most in need of attention. National and Regional roles in implementing the NCW program, the content of NCW strategies and annual workplans, and a formula for allocating national NCW resources are also addressed. The new guidance, reflecting comments from all Regional NCW program managers at the recent Ocean and Coastal Protection Division Branch Chief's meeting in Sante Fe, is more comprehensive than past guidances which have focused predominantly on funds allocation and offered limited information on other management issues. Contact: Mark Curran, (FTS) 260-6502.

Assistance for Indian Tribe Nonpoint Source Programs

In order to be eligible for Section 319 funding for nonpoint source (NPS) activities, Indian Tribes must have approved NPS assessment and management programs and comply with "treatment as a state" requirements. The former has proven to be very difficult for some tribes, and as a result, tribes have not received the funding needed to attack their NPS problems. To address this issue, Congress set aside \$500,000 in FY 1992 to assist Indian Tribes in becoming eligible to receive grant funding. AWPD issued guidance to the Regions in January laying out a program for interested Tribes, with Regional assistance, to submit proposals for developing approvable NPS plans. Nineteen tribes submitted proposals, and eleven were selected for funding. Contact: Stu Tuller, (FTS) 260-7112.



Office of Wetlands, Oceans & Watersheds

"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.

Heads Up!

May is American Wetlands Month! EPA and other public and private organizations are co-sponsoring the second annual celebration. The goal of this event is to increase public awareness of the values and importance of wetland areas, encourage people to take advantage of the unique opportunities these areas have to offer, and take action to protect, enhance, and restore wetland areas in their community. EPA and the Terrine Institute in Washington, D.C. are coordinating this year's celebration. The staff at Terrine can be reached at (202) 833-8317. For more information you may also contact the EPA Wetlands Hotline at 1-800-832-7828.

OWOW's National Program Meeting will be held May 5 - 7 in Washington, D.C. The meeting will highlight OWOW "Customer Service" to the Regions, watershed approaches, and agricultural issues.

Recent Releases

1990 National Water Quality Inventory Report to Congress. Summarizes most up-to-date information from the States on the quality of their rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters, wetlands, and ground water resources. Information is provided on the extent to which these waters meet designated uses, and the pollutants and sources causing impairment. Printed reports are expected to be available by late April. Contact: Alice Mayo, (FTS) 260-7018 or Barry Burgan, (FTS) 260-7060.

Managing Nonpoint Source Pollution: Final Report to Congress on Section 319 of the Clean Water Act (1989). Describes the state of the national effort to control and prevent NPS pollution as of October 1, 1989. Includes findings of the states' NPS assessments; descriptions of state programs for addressing problems identified during the assessments; and achievements to date in controlling and preventing NPS pollution. Printed reports are expected to be available by late April. Contact: Dov Weitman, (FTS) 260-7100.



Partners in Flight - Aves de las Americas The Water Program Connection

One of today's most widely discussed conservation issues is the dramatic decline in the populations of neotropical migratory birds. In response to this concern, an innovative partnership of public and private organizations has been established under the auspices of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This new effort, called *Partners in Flight - Aves de las Americas* and formally known as the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program, was launched in 1990, through the execution of memoranda of agreement among a number of key federal agencies and conservation and research organizations. The former include both land managing agencies such as BLM, the Forest Service, and DOD and regulatory agencies such as EPA together with the Fish and Wildlife Service, which has both roles.

What is the objective of *Partners in Flight*?

The title of the program, *Partners in Flight - Aves de las Americas*, highlights both the need for cooperation and the central role of the Latin American wintering grounds in any strategy to conserve these species. The objective of this program is to create the first integrated federal, state, and private program for research, monitoring, and habitat management for migratory nongame birds. The impetus for the program came from the concern, building for years, for declines in the populations of neotropical migratory birds — species that breed in North America and winter in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. The causes of these declines are complex and not fully understood, but habitat loss and related problems

are key issues. International efforts will focus on Canada, a major breeding area, and Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, the major overwintering grounds. The strategy for this program is to stimulate cooperative public and private sector efforts involving public agencies at all levels, foundations, private organizations, and businesses in North America and the neotropics.

Some Examples of Neotropical Migrants*

Peregrine Falcon
Upland Sandpiper
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Common Nighthawk
Chimney Swift
Rufous Hummingbird
Willow Flycatcher
Cliff Swallow
House Wren
Swainson's Thrush
Solitary Vireo
Yellow Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Summer Tanager
Blue Grosbeak
Chipping Sparrow
Boblink
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Northern Oriole

* Selected from *Partners in Flight* preliminary list of over 250 species.



How can you help?

Because many of these species depend upon aquatic habitats for some or all of their life functions—and all depend upon clean water for drinking—water program managers can make a vital contribution to this effort. Clearly one of the most direct linkages is through our efforts to protect coastal resources, wetlands, lakes, stream and river habitats, and riparian zones. Programs such as the National Estuary Program, Near Coastal Waters Program, Section 404 Program, Clean Lakes Program, the “Great Water Bodies” programs, and other watershed protection projects provide important vehicles to protect both the physical and chemical integrity of these systems. However, water program people can also be critical members of the team through activities involving all facets of permitting and enforcement, development and application of criteria and standards, construction and operation of waste- and stormwater treatment systems, protection of ground water resources, monitoring, and water quality planning. Each of these contributes incrementally to maintaining the environmental quality necessary to sustain these populations and species.

For the most part, the best way to help is simply to continue to do what we do best; that is, managing aquatic resources in a manner that retains their integrity and natural functions. However, knowledge of the special needs of neotropical migratory birds is also important in helping to protect or enhance those aquatic system attributes that are most critical to supporting such species. One of the key challenges for program participants is to collect, analyze, package, and disseminate information on these bird species and their management needs.

How will *Partners in Flight* help water programs?

Looking at this effort from the opposite perspective, we should realize that increased interest in bird conservation will also help us to better marshal

the resources and public support we need to protect aquatic resources since people have strong emotional ties to wild birds. Thus, they are more likely to rally to their protection, with spillover benefits for water quality and aquatic habitats, than for some of the less tangible benefits or more complex and obscure attributes of aquatic systems.

What is the organizational structure of *Partners in Flight*?

The program currently operates through four domestic regional workgroups and five national groups organized around functional areas (monitoring, research, legislation, information and education, and international activities.) A Caribbean working group will probably be established this year. Water program managers and staff at all levels are encouraged to become familiar with the program and to participate in appropriate working groups or activities. For more information on the program and working groups, contact Peter Stangel, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 18th and C Streets NW, Washington DC 20240.

Within EPA, we have established an ad hoc work group to help focus and coordinate EPA efforts on behalf of the *Partners in Flight* Program. Mike Slimak (ORD/OEPEP), Anne Barton (OPPTS/OPP), and Dave Davis (OW/OWOW) lead the workgroup and serve as official members of the interagency Steering Committee for the *Partners* programs. Mike Troyer (ORD/OTTRS) serves as Executive Secretary of the group and principal contact with the other agencies and organizations. EPA Water Program personnel interested in the program are encouraged to contact Dave Davis (FTS 260-7166) or Janet Pawlukiewicz (FTS 260-9194) for further information or to share ideas.