

# Midwest Natural Resources Group

## Watershed Planning Guidelines \*

### Introduction

These guidelines have been developed as a tool to provide a broad framework of considerations and processes in watershed projects and programs. They will help provide opportunities for collaboration, communication and assistance among the agencies, groups, and private individuals of the upper Midwest.

#### I. General Considerations

- A. Involve all stakeholders who have an interest in the watershed at all levels, including Federal, tribal, state, local, non-government and private landowners and citizens.
- B. Consider unique restoration needs, ready sponsorship, political interest, national goals, data availability, and needs.
- C. Consider all interdependent goals of: environmental quality, economic development, social well being, and research and monitoring.
- D. Base all proposals on sound and best available science, minimum impact techniques, engineering and economics.
- E. Recognize locally led and managed programs and initiatives.
- F. Strive to ensure that existing natural resources and habitats are not further degraded.
- G. Consider all groups working on other watershed projects for lessons learned, process help, and technical support.

#### II. General Process

- A. Identify historic conditions and existing conditions and needs.
- B. Identify existing laws and authorities applicable to the watershed efforts.
- C. Develop desired and obtainable future conditions that address stakeholder interests.
- D. Include public outreach and education while meeting project

V. 3/1/2004

requirements.

- E. Develop actions in priority order and measures of effectiveness.
- F. Write management plan and coordinate.
- G. Secure funding for the watershed efforts.
- H. Implement the watershed plan with the stakeholders.
- I. Monitor progress and adjust actions as necessary.

III. Economic Development Goals

- A. Support sustainable economic activities in the watershed.
- B. Involve stakeholders, landowners, business, industry, and agriculture sectors in planning for natural resource sustainability and restoration.

IV. Social Well-Being Goals

A. Human Resources

1. Support human development in such a manner to minimize its impacts on natural resources.
2. Develop, support and/or coordinate with stakeholders in conservation easements, ownership, and management with stakeholders.
3. Protect and manage archeological, cultural, and scenic resources.

B. Recreation

1. Support sustainable recreational activities.

V. Environmental Quality Goals

A. Habitat

1. Promote a full range of interconnected natural habitats.
2. Promote habitat redevelopment in areas that can act as riparian buffers that can absorb storm water, and that can minimize the effects of flooding.

3. Promote opportunities to establish new habitat corridors, or maintain and restore existing natural habitat corridors and significant environments that are being threatened by land conversion including urban sprawl and agriculture.
4. Protect, restore, and create habitats for threatened and endangered species and native species.
5. Monitor, manage and control exotic species.

B. Hydrology

1. Utilize a comprehensive approach to water management, which includes sustaining natural ecological systems, recreation, navigation, flood control, industrial processes and public water supply.
2. Promote natural watershed hydrologic and geomorphic functions.

C. Water Quality

1. Develop a comprehensive plan to achieve established achievable objectives for silt, sedimentation, nutrients, and toxics.
2. Promote natural vegetative riparian buffers and grassed corridors. .
3. Assess the cumulative impacts of point and non-point sources of pollution on stream quality.
4. Work with local watershed groups to identify opportunities to implement Best Management Practices.

VI. Research and Monitoring Goals

- A. Inventory, map, identify, and prioritize ecological challenges.
- B. Monitor and measure the actions taken.
- C. Adapt actions based on assessment of research and monitoring results.

\* Guidelines should not be interpreted as creating obligations for which any entity, either Federal, state, local, or private, does not have the authority. Additionally, these guidelines do not create additional rights, obligations, or responsibilities legally enforceable by outside parties.

## Agency Supplements

### Introduction

The following information is provided to show each agency's concepts and issues as they relate to watershed planning. Each agency below is a member of the MNRG Federal partnership. Web links are provided for additional resources and tools each provides in support of watersheds and sustainability of natural resources and the environment.

### Environmental Protection Agency

### Bureau of Land Management

### U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) continues to place a great emphasis on environmental principals and working in collaboration with others in a watershed-planning environment. The Corps has learned that in order to meet our nations needs, the watershed approach is the correct path to solving water challenges. This is evident both in the Environmental Operating Principles that Lt. General Robert Flowers released in 2002, and the Corps Civil Works Strategic Plan for FY 2004-2009 released in early 2004. Environmental sustainability and watershed principles are at the heart of both these programs.

The Corp's watershed principles include: partnerships; systems approaches; large scale analysis; achieve balanced multiple goals and functions; share information; provide technical assistance; work locally; improve watershed models; improve regulatory programs, and improve traditional Corps projects in a more environmentally sustainable manner.

Additional information on Corps environmental programs, projects and initiatives can be found at <http://www.usace.army.mil>.

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Additional information on USFWS environmental programs and initiatives can be found at [http://midwest.fws.gov/EcosystemConservation/ecosystem\\_approach.html](http://midwest.fws.gov/EcosystemConservation/ecosystem_approach.html)

### U.S. Forest Service

### U.S. Geological Service

## Bureau of Indian Affairs

## National Park Service

The most important statutory directive of the National Park Service (NPS) is provided by interrelated provisions of the NPS Organic Act of 1916, and the NPS General Authorities Act of 1970, including amendments to the latter law enacted in 1978.

The key management-related provision of the Organic Act is:

*“[The National Park Service] shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as National parks, monuments, and reservations... by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”*  
(16 USC 1)

Congress supplemented and clarified these provisions through enactment of the General Authorities Act of 1970, and again through enactment of a 1978 amendment (the so-called “Redwood amendment,” contained in a bill expanding Redwood National Park). Congress intended the language of the “Redwood amendment” to the General Authorities Act to reiterate the provisions of the Organic Act, not to create a substantively different management standard. The “fundamental purpose” of the national park system, established by the Organic Act and reaffirmed by the General Authorities Act, as amended, begins with a mandate to conserve park resources and values. The fundamental purpose of all parks also includes providing for the enjoyment of park resources and values by the people of the United States.

Agency policy regarding watershed stewardship is presented in *National Park Service Management Policies 2001*, which is the basic Service-wide policy document:

*“The Service [NPS] will manage watersheds as complete hydrologic systems, and will minimize human disturbance to the natural upland processes that deliver water, sediment, and woody debris to streams. These processes include runoff, erosion, and disturbance to vegetation and soil caused by fire, insects, meteorological events, and mass movements. The Service will manage streams to protect stream processes that create habitat features such as floodplains, riparian systems, woody debris accumulations, terraces, gravel bars, riffles, and pools. Stream processes include flooding, stream migration, and associated erosion and deposition.*

*“The Service will achieve the protection of watershed and stream features primarily by avoiding impacts to watershed and riparian vegetation, and by allowing natural fluvial processes to proceed unimpeded. When conflict*

V. 3/1/2004

*between infrastructure (such as bridges and pipeline crossings) and stream processes are unavoidable, NPS managers will first consider relocating or redesigning facilities, rather than manipulating streams. Where stream manipulation is unavoidable, managers will use techniques That are visually non-intrusive and that protect natural processes to the greatest extent practicable.”*

In addition to these fundamental laws and policies, the NPS also operates under a variety of additional Federal laws and Executive Orders in common with other Federal agencies. These include: the National Environmental Policy Act (969), as amended; the Clean Water Act; Executive Order 11990 (Wetlands Protection) of 1977; Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) of 1977; the Endangered Species Act (1973); the Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899, as amended (33 USC 401-466n); the Water Quality Improvement Act (1970); and the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), and amendments (1986).

Please refer to the following NPS website for that agency's water and watershed-related matters: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/water>

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Federal Highway Administration

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Office of Surface Mining

U.S. Coast Guard

Department of Energy