

Watershed Events



A Bulletin on Sustaining Water Resources and Ecosystems

In This Issue...

This issue of *Watershed Events* features stories from 6 of the 13 Regional Watershed Roundtables. These Roundtables are the building blocks for the National Watershed Forum to be held this summer in Arlington, Virginia.

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Regional Watershed Roundtables: Building Blocks for the National Watershed Forum

by Christine Lewicki,
Environmental Protection Agency

All across the country, diverse watershed interests are gathering at regional watershed roundtables to identify innovative opportunities to improve local watershed protection and restoration efforts. In this issue of *Watershed Events*, the conveners of 6 of the 13 roundtables will share their experiences from these exciting regional dialogues.

Using seed money provided by several federal agencies, the conveners of the Roundtables assembled diverse watershed stakeholders throughout their regions to deliberate on the challenges facing today's watershed practitioners. Each of these roundtables is unique. Yet they share similarities, including the following:

- Enhancing communication among local watershed interests such as business, agriculture, tribes, civic organizations, and local, state, and federal government agencies to better protect, manage, and restore the region's watersheds.
- Providing democratic forums for stakeholder discussions of barriers to and innovative solutions for watershed management.

- Providing peer-to-peer learning opportunities to help stakeholders acquire the best solutions.

The experience and findings of the roundtables will serve as building blocks for the National Watershed Forum, which is being convened by the Meridian Institute from June 27 to July 1, 2001, in Arlington, Virginia.

Recommendations from the Roundtables will help to shape the National Watershed Forum so that it meets the needs of the broad array of stakeholders involved in collaborative watershed protection and restoration efforts throughout the nation. The Forum will be a highly interactive event. Local, state, tribal, and regional leaders will gather to debate the future of watershed management and the efforts and partnerships needed to support and sustain community-based watershed protection efforts.

Government alone cannot restore and protect the nation's aquatic resources. Citizens across the country recognize this and are seeking collaborative partnerships to make further improvements in the condition of the aquatic resources in their local communities.

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Both the Roundtables and the National Watershed Forum provide valuable processes for democratic deliberation among these diverse watershed interests. By advancing the discussion of future directions for watershed management, the Forum will hopefully

inspire innovative ideas that will help sustain our watersheds into the next century and beyond.

The convener of the Forum, the Meridian Institute, specializes in the design and facilitation of multi-party dialogues, partnership development, strategic planning, and advancing the use of collaborative processes.

Financial support for the National Watershed Forum has been provided by the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, Department of Transportation, Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Agriculture, Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The 13 Watershed Roundtables

Roundtable	Convener	Dates
I. Pacific Northwest	Washington State University's Center for Sustainable Agriculture Don Nelson (509) 335-2922	September 13-14, 2000 in Spokane September 6-7, 2000 in Portland October 3-4, 2000 in Boise
II. California	Watershed Management Council Sari Sommerstram (510) 273-9066	September 1, 1999 in Davis November 15, 1999 in Davis February 2, 2000 in Davis May 17, 2000 in Davis
III. Intermountain	USDA Forest Service Jack Blackwell-Regional Forester Intermountain Region Leann Belnap (801) 625-5156	October 16-17, 2000 Salt Lake City, Utah
IV. Heartland	Groundwater Foundation Susan Seacrest (800) 858-4844	December 2000, Kansas September 8-9, 2000, Missouri September 24-26, 2000, Nebraska December 2000, Iowa
V. Rocky Mountain	Montana Watercourse Mary Ellen Wolfe (406) 994-1910	May 15-17, 2000 Bozeman, Montana
VI. South Central	LEAF Alliance Laura Koesters (512) 328-2202	September 6-7, 2000 Dallas, Texas
VII. Great Lakes	Conservation Technology Information Center Lyn Kirschner (765) 494-9555	May 9-11, 2000 Chicago
VIII. MidAtlantic	Frost Valley YMCA Carol O'Beirne (845) 985-2291 ext. 201	October 25-27 2000 Claryville, New York
IX. Northeast	River Network Pat Munoz (202) 364-2550	1997 and 1998 Winter 2000
X. Southeast	Tennessee Valley Authority Christine Olsenius (410) 849-2975	August 1998, August 1999, August 24-25, 2000 in Birmingham
XI. Alaska	Nature Conservancy-Alaska Chapter Paul Jackson (907) 276-3133	February 10, 2000 in Anchorage October/November 2000 in Anchorage
XII. Eastern Coal Region	Canaan Valley Institute Kiena Smith (800) 922-3601	June 6-8, 2000 Shepardstown, West Virginia
XIII. Upper Mississippi	National Audubon Society Dan McGuiness (651) 290-1695	September 15-17, 2000 Sinsinawa, Wisconsin

Watershed Events

Patty Scott
Editor, U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency

This Issue's Contributors

Christine Lewicki, Environmental
Protection Agency
Pat Munos, River Network
Christine Olsenius, Tennessee
Valley Authority, Program
Consultant
Janie French, Canaan Valley
Institute
Sari Sommarstrom, Watershed
Management Council
Paul G. Jackson, The Nature
Conservancy of Alaska
Mary Ellen Wolfe, Montana Water-
course

Watershed Events provides updated and timely information to professionals and others interested in the development and implementation of the watershed approach and in achieving watershed goals. The watershed approach focuses on mitigating the primary threats to ecosystem and human health and involving stakeholders to take action in an integrated, holistic manner. Please direct any questions or comments to:

Patty Scott
U.S. EPA
Ariel Rios Building (4501F)
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460
(202) 260-1956
scott.patricia@epa.gov

To be added to the *Watershed Events* mailing list, send your name and address to:

Melissa DeSantis
Tetra Tech, Inc.
10306 Eaton Place, Suite 340
Fairfax, VA 22030
desanme@tetrattech-ffx.com

Correction

In the last issue, a photograph was incorrectly attributed to Dave Davis. The photo credit belongs to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Integrating Growth Management and Watershed Management Emerges as Priorities for the Northeast Watershed Roundtable

by Pat Munoz, River Network

In late 1996, a number of nonprofit river and watershed organizations in New England and New York approached the New England Federal Partners for Natural Resources with a proposal to work together to hold the first Northeast Watershed Roundtable. The purpose of that first gathering was to bring nonprofits together with federal and state agency personnel for a dialogue about how to protect, manage, and restore watersheds in the Northeast. A planning committee, consisting of nonprofits and federal and state government personnel, assembled the program and recruited participants.

"The logic of the watershed focus is compelling and is not going to go away. But the challenge of making it work, from the governance standpoint and from the agency/citizen perspective, is going to demand some of our best thinking, ingenuity, and innovations-- along with a great deal of patience."

*Ted Smith, Henry P. Kendall
Foundation*

The first Roundtable was held in July 1997 at the Northfield-Mt. Hermon Campus in western Massachusetts. More than 150 people attended the 2-day event, and much excitement was generated by the lively discussions of six key issues: water quality, in-stream flow, habitat restoration, watershed information, riparian buffers, and watershed planning. Participants produced lists of short- and long-term actions to help solve problems or

improve existing conditions in the watersheds.

The second Roundtable, held in July 1998, took up where the first left off, focusing on creating a prioritized list of recommended actions. At the top of the list was integrating growth management policies, tools, and techniques with watershed planning; next was developing a watershed message for the region; third was protecting and restoring riparian areas; and fourth, critical to all of the others, was strengthening watershed organizations by building capacity at the local level and increasing available resources.

Where energy and resources existed, working groups were formed and their accomplishments have been significant. They have:

- Created a Northeast watershed listserve with 350 subscribers as a tool for communicating items of interest to the entire watershed community in the northeast.
- Produced and distributed a funding directory for watershed groups in the Northeast.
- Conducted Fundraising Clinics.
- Hosted an In-Stream Flow Workshop for the New England states.
- Produced and distributed a brochure summarizing the recommendations of the Roundtables for key decision-makers, funders, and others.

The Roundtable has developed a structure consisting of an appointed executive committee and a steering committee that is open to anyone. Because of the high priority accorded to growth management, the executive committee is beginning to plan a third Roundtable meeting for spring/summer 2001 that will focus on integrating growth management and watershed management.

Northeast, from page 3

The members of the Northeast Watershed Roundtable have learned some significant lessons:

- Keeping down or subsidizing the cost of events like the Roundtables encourages nonprofit participation.
- Participation in the Roundtables is a reflection of the organizing committee—we need to work harder to involve local government and corporations by including them in the organizing phase.
- Collaboration is time-consuming—participants must be prepared to spend many hours building trust and respect.
- Collaboration requires resources. Without financial assistance from EPA, the National Park Service, Northeast Utilities, and other participants, we would have been unable to maintain momentum.
- Tracking/publicizing our tangible achievements is important—we keep a running list of accomplishments, which we circulate frequently.
- It is important to have stable, senior representation on the governing body of the collaborative.

The Northeast Watershed Roundtable is meeting its goal of promoting integrated action through the many partnerships that have been formed as a result of our collaboration. We hope to continue to expand the dialogue with Roundtable III. Through our activities, and those of many others, it is becoming clear to people across New England that organizing restoration and protection efforts around watersheds makes a great deal of sense.

For more information, contact Pat Munoz, (202)364-2550, e-mail: pmunoz@rivernetwork.org or see the web site: www.rivernetwork.org.

Northeast Watershed Roundtable High Priority Actions

Link Growth Management and Watershed Planning

- ✓ Integrate growth management policies, tools, and techniques with watershed planning so that growth management becomes a key land use component of watershed plan implementation.

Promote the Watershed Approach Through Outreach and Increased Funding

- ✓ Develop a watershed(s) message for the region in conjunction with marketing research.
- ✓ Create a regional working group focused on increased funding and resources for watershed work in New England.
- ✓ Create a keyed regional directory of funding sources, tips for accessing them, and training on their use.
- ✓ Identify and evaluate existing watershed management initiatives and distribute this information broadly.

Protect Riparian Buffers

- ✓ Enhance local capacity to understand the benefits of riparian buffers.
- ✓ Evaluate and amend state and local policies and programs to increase their effectiveness for protecting riparian areas.

Build Capacity at the Local Level and Support Local Stewardship

- ✓ Ensure that the knowledge of key activities is accessible to local stewardship organizations by improving existing or creating new mechanisms among stakeholders.
- ✓ Provide support and resources at the local level via regional planning agencies, intermunicipal compacts, watershed associations, etc., on issues, including but not limited to, local growth management based on water-carrying capacity, wastewater, and drinking water.
- ✓ Develop a support system for local volunteer monitoring groups.
- ✓ Increase meaningful opportunities for local groups and volunteers to participate in stewardship.
- ✓ Build and/or strengthen the capacity for effective interaction among stakeholders.

Protect In-Stream Flow

- ✓ Hold a regional conference on in-stream flow protection, science, and a policy to educate and improve regulatory policy.
- ✓ Create and implement an outreach strategy to provide appropriate in-stream flow information to public/private nonprofit agencies and organizations.

Conduct Watershed Assessment and Data Management

- ✓ Make data accessible, locally relevant, and credible.
- ✓ Establish a Watershed Data Task Force to develop a system to ensure comparability among assessments.
- ✓ Provide data, technical assistance, and financial assistance to enable local decision-makers to protect and restore water quality.
- ✓ Develop, adopt, and apply data standards and qualify the data.

Protect and Restore Habitat

- ✓ Develop a partnership approach to identification of potential restoration sites.
- ✓ Protect watershed wetlands, including vernal pools and salt marshes.

Southeast Watershed Forum Roundtable Engages City-County Officials

by Christine Olsenius, Program Consultant, Tennessee Valley Authority

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management hosted the third Southeast Roundtable in Birmingham on August 24–25, 2000. Approximately 185 leaders from industry, agriculture, municipalities, regional planning councils, environmental and conservation groups, river and watershed organizations, and academic institutions met with state and federal agency representatives to discuss ways to improve the protection and restoration of watersheds in their states and throughout the region. For the first time, 35 elected and appointed officials from counties and cities in nine states joined in the discussions. The Conference of Southern County Associations, the National Association of Counties, and the International City/County Management Association were instrumental in making it possible for these officials to actively participate.

Lindsay Thomas, President of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and

Federal Commissioner of the ACT-ACF River Basin Compacts, kicked off the Southeast Watershed Forum Roundtable 2000 with a warning that the tri-state water war among Alabama, Georgia, and Florida is just a portent of greater regional competition for high quality water in the rapidly developing South. To help attendees better address issues such as growth, development, and urban sprawl, which are stressing water supplies and water quality across the Southeast, the Roundtable provided specialty training workshops, success stories, and small group discussions on key resource issues and changing regulations.

Training

The Roundtable provided training on watershed protection tools and ideas on how to implement them back home.

“Local governments and officials have often felt like the movie, ‘Home Alone.’ We are often forgotten with things proceeding without our participation, which in the end, causes lots of backtracking and redoing the trip. But we are changing that here today.”

*Jim Campbell, President
Conference of Southern County
Associations*

For example, Dr. Richard Whisnant from the Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill provided a training workshop for city and county officials on *Financing Mechanisms for Watershed Planning and Protection*. Tom Schueler, Executive Director of the Center for Watershed Protection, offered a workshop on *Rapid Watershed Planning, Site Design and Stormwater Management*. Pat Munoz with River Network provided a half-day *Fundraising Workshop for Watershed Associations*.

Success Stories

Success stories from local communities, industries, agencies, and watershed groups around the Southeast provided a positive picture of people “doing it right,” and saving money in the process. “Clean water is good business,” stated Carla Dupuy from Crescent Resources, Inc., a residential development company. Crescent Resources has committed to establishing permanent conservation easements on all the property they own, nearly 200 miles of streams in North and South Carolina. This buffer zone will protect water quality from sedimentation and runoff, thus ensuring a high quality community for the new homeowners. Cindy Angelelli from Duke Power discussed an industry-led initiative to support restoration efforts nationwide through the National Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership.

Facilitated Dialogue

Facilitated discussions resulted in statewide commitments to action. The delegation from Tennessee, for example, committed to developing new incentives for streamside management zones, encouraging environmentally friendly zoning ordinances, and providing greater education of local officials on watershed issues.

While every state had specific issues of their own, seven of the nine delegations



Most of the Southeast Watershed Forum Roundtable was spent in small breakout discussions. Here the Alabama delegation discusses state priorities for watershed protection. The second day was devoted to discussions on TMDLs, CAFOs and buffers, greenways, and mitigation banking.

See Southeast, page 9

Watershed Groups Speak Up at Eastern Coal Region Roundtable

by Janie French, Canaan Valley Institute

Funding, partnerships, enforcement, and support by public agencies are the keys to successful watershed restoration efforts, according to grass roots organizations gathered at the Eastern Coal Region Restoration Roundtable. Local stakeholders from across a 13-state area attended this historic event, the first of its kind to focus on a single issue: coal mine drainage.

From June 6–8, 2000, a diverse group of representatives throughout the eastern coal region came together at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, to identify the most critical issues challenging local watershed efforts. The Roundtable solicited feedback on successes and barriers facing local groups working to restore watersheds impacted by abandoned coal mines. The Roundtable culminated in an informational sharing session on Capitol Hill, where recommendations were presented to federal and legislative officials. Eighteen representatives from Alabama, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Tennessee, and other coal states spoke with a unified voice to decision-makers on strategies and recommendations generated over the 2 1/2-day session.

Watershed groups recognized the importance of reauthorizing the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) trust fund, which expires in 2004 and provides much of the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) and State AML program funds. In addition, the groups urged more flexibility with EPA Section 319 nonpoint source grants. It was noted that some states exclude the use of funds for administrative expenses,

“Acid mine drainage is both the most significant environmental problem in Coal Country and the most emblematic as well. Orange streams and bony piles are the remnants of pre-regulatory coal mining, a legacy of environmental devastation and economic abandonment that can be successfully addressed by those that live with its consequences.”

*Dr. Allan Comp,
Office of Surface Mining*

such as the funding of watershed coordinators. Facilitating partnerships that include all stakeholders, including the mining industry, to create win-win situations was also cited as a priority. Further, groups recognized the importance of using comprehensive watershed approaches to identify issues of concern for all stakeholder groups. Government streamlining to include “one-stop-shopping” via the Internet and the establishment of interagency technical centers was also recommended. Utilizing the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for engineering services and EPA and OSM for construction dollars was given as an example of how restoration activities could be coordinated and integrated. Finally, groups expressed the need for consistency among states in the enforcement of the Clean Water Act. Both EPA and OSM were urged to strengthen oversight of state enforcement agencies in applying federal law. A special briefing on Capitol Hill, with an information exchange among agency staff, elected officials, and Roundtable participants, concluded the event.

Dr. Allan Comp, a Roundtable participant with the Office of Surface Mining, reflected that “acid mine drainage is both the most significant environmental problem in Coal Country and the most emblematic as well. Orange streams

and bony piles are the remnants of pre-regulatory coal mining, a legacy of environmental devastation and economic abandonment that can be successfully addressed by those that live with its consequences.” Watershed groups in the coal mining states and the agencies with whom they partner recognize that they are addressing not just the environmental legacy of abandoned mine drainage, but the social and economic blight left in the wake of World War II expansion, massive job losses in the 1950s and after, and a contemporary watershed environment that leaves too many people feeling helpless or powerless. Those who attended the Roundtable feel that their recommendations are important for improving the environment as well as revitalizing the economy in the region.

On July 6th, just one month after the Roundtable, Barry Thacker, a Roundtable participant from the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation in Tennessee, had the opportunity to speak to the Democratic National Platform Committee in St. Louis, Missouri. Thacker’s message echoed recommendations put forth at the Roundtable. “If you are truly to improve water quality,” he said, “you have to do it as a component of improving the quality of life of those who live in the watershed.” Thacker also sent a copy of his testimony to Texas Gov. George W. Bush urging him to consider the recommendations from the Roundtable for his party’s platform.

Canaan Valley Institute, which convened the Roundtable, is a non-profit, non-advocacy organization working with watershed groups to foster decision-making at the local level.

For more information, contact Janie French, Canaan Valley Institute, (814) 768-9584, e-mail: jfcvi@uplink.net.

The California Watershed Management Forums: 12 Steps to Watershed Recovery

by Sari Sommarstrom, President, Watershed Management Council

With 100 million acres and 35 million people, California decided to take up the challenge of forming its own watershed "roundtable." Over the past year, "shedheads" from around the state gathered for a series of four, one-day forums, sponsored by the Watershed Management Council (WMC), a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to advancing the art and science of watershed management. State and federal agencies and a myriad of organizations involved with watershed restoration and management efforts throughout California agreed that the time was ripe for a statewide dialogue.

The purpose of the forums was to provide a neutral setting where ideas, opportunities, and needs for watershed management across the state could be discussed openly. Initially, the focus was on state and local relationships, as that role was considered sufficiently complex. When EPA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) joined as co-sponsors and financial contributors, however, the goals were expanded to include an examination of the federal role.

Participation Process

Participation was by invitation only and limited in number to provide for optimum discussion and exchange of perspectives. Invitations were targeted for each of the state's 10 major river basins, including the Sacramento, North Coast, San Francisco Bay, and Los Angeles. One hundred and thirty-

"The best parts of the forums were hearing other's viewpoints, meeting new people, and the creative approach to each forum (enjoyable!)."

*Diane Gaumer,
Executive Director, Deer Creek*

eight people attended at least one of the four forums, representing state agencies, the California State legislature, local governments, local watershed groups, land and water management agencies, environmental groups, federal agencies, and universities. Attendance at each of the four forums ranged from 45 to 77. Located near the state capital of Sacramento, the University of California campus at Davis provided an ideal setting.

Forums #1 and #2: "Identifying the Potential" and the "Expectations of Governance"

Out-of-state speakers from Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington kicked off the opening dialogue on September 1, 1999, with presentations about their innovative state-local watershed programs. They were followed by two experts who presented more regional and national perspectives. From that very energizing beginning, the second forum, held on November 15, 1999, moved on to explore the various in-state views and expectations of state and local governance of watershed management programs. Four panels of diverse speakers responded to specific questions related to accountability, governance structure and flexibility, incentives, and technical support.

Forums #3 and #4: "Shaping a Robust, Collaborative Framework" and "Filling In the Framework"

During the third forum, held on February 2, 2000, participants really started to listen to one another. Attendees were divided into four groups and rotated round-robin style among four subtopic sessions, deliberating on how best to create a "robust," collaborative framework for watershed management in California. Finally, a questionnaire synthesizing comments made at the three forums was prepared and sent out to all participants to rank their level of agreement. Results were presented and discussed at the fourth and final forum, held on May 17, 2000, where there appeared to be convergence of agreement on about one-third of the 182 statements and strong disagreement on another third.

Participants agreed to move forward where consensus existed. The result—"12 Steps to Watershed Recovery in California"—was drafted and fleshed out (see box below).

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Six of the 12 Key Steps Identified by the California Roundtable:

- ✓ Form a statewide network of local watershed group.
- ✓ Coordinate Agency watershed work officially through formal agreements.
- ✓ Obtain legislative endorsement of the state's commitments.
- ✓ Seek endorsement by the Governor for the state's commitment.
- ✓ Prepare handbooks and guidelines for watershed assessment and planning.

Alaska Watershed Roundtable—A Community-Based Approach to Sustainability in the Great Land

By Paul G. Jackson, The Nature Conservancy of Alaska

On February 10, 2000, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) of Alaska hosted the Alaska Watershed Roundtable at the Campbell Creek Science Center. Forty participants representing local watershed efforts throughout Alaska, state and federal agencies, academia, tribes, and conservation organizations were present to discuss the challenges of starting, developing, and sustaining watershed planning and management efforts in Alaska. The principal problems identified and discussed included lessening the difficulty in tapping into and sustaining funding on a consistent basis; educating their respective public audiences about watershed issues; getting necessary and consistent technical assistance, information, and training; and establishing productive and understanding relationships with agencies. At the end of the Roundtable, participants concluded that a new coordinated and committed statewide effort—an Alaska Watershed Cooperative (AWC)—was needed to address and solve these problems.

The Solution(s)

After lengthy discussions, the Roundtable participants transformed challenges into possible solutions. The Roundtable produced the following conclusions and recommendations, which were then presented to the Watershed Summit of federal and state agency leaders on the following day, February 11, 2000.

- State and federal agencies need to take the time to sit down and understand the needs of local efforts and work closely with them to meet those needs.

- There especially needs to be a better working relationship between agencies and tribes on watershed issues.
- There should be a statewide coordinated effort to meet the needs of local watershed planning and management efforts.

- A core-planning group should be formed to design and develop a centralized entity, as well as determine how it should be funded and formalized. The entity could provide a number of coordinated or independent functions and services, including the following:

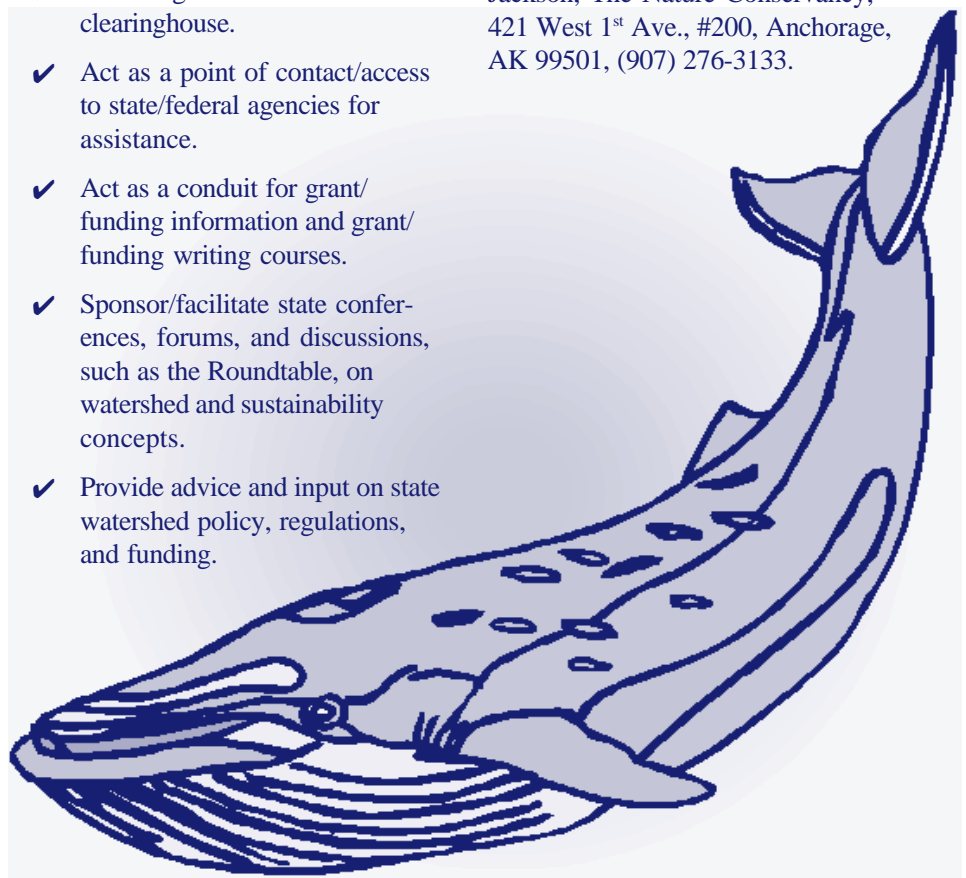
- ✓ Offer short courses on watershed concepts and sustainability.
- ✓ Assist with the development, writing, and implementation of watershed plans.
- ✓ Assist with GIS development, monitoring programs, and other technical services.
- ✓ Act as a general information clearinghouse.
- ✓ Act as a point of contact/access to state/federal agencies for assistance.
- ✓ Act as a conduit for grant/funding information and grant/funding writing courses.
- ✓ Sponsor/facilitate state conferences, forums, and discussions, such as the Roundtable, on watershed and sustainability concepts.
- ✓ Provide advice and input on state watershed policy, regulations, and funding.

- There needs to be a formal commitment of resources and services to such an entity, so it can leverage support from other funding sources.

The Roundtable participants further explored how a coordinated, statewide effort—a new Alaska Watershed Cooperative (AWC)—could address identified barriers and better meet the needs of local watershed efforts.

A core-planning group made up to 15 individuals representing a broad spectrum of watershed interests and efforts from across the state has been formed. Over the next year, the group will attend facilitated meetings to design the Alaska Watershed Cooperative (AWC), formalize its mission and structure, and develop a 3-year funding strategy. The strategic plan will be presented to a Joint Summit of senior agency leaders in late 2000 or early 2001. The agencies will be asked to provide support for the AWC.

For more information, contact Paul Jackson, The Nature Conservancy, 421 West 1st Ave., #200, Anchorage, AK 99501, (907) 276-3133.



Southeast, from page 5

ranked as their first priority the need for better watershed protection, land-use planning, and zoning to address urban sprawl. Six of the nine delegations ranked as their second priority the need to better educate all elected officials, as well as all citizens, on the connection between declining water quality in the Southeast and urban sprawl, development, and changing land-use patterns. The third priority was the need for more funding to provide field staff, technical expertise, monitoring, inspections, and enforcement, as well as implementation of TMDLs and support for local watershed initiatives.

Specific recommendations were made by participants to federal, state, and local agencies on how to implement TMDLs more effectively, the complicated process of assigning total maximum daily loads to a waterbody to ensure that it attains water quality goals.

Awards

Charles Adams, Regional Conservationist for the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service, presented the new Watershed Leadership Awards from the Southeast Natural Resource Leaders Group, the regional directors of federal agencies. The Awards recognize efforts that reflect inter-agency cooperation, innovation in watershed protection, and citizen participation.

Jean Ann Moon, on behalf of the Marshall County Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), accepted the Local Watershed Leadership Award. The program's 100 volunteer monitors have gathered the most extensive collection of water quality data of any county in Alabama. The Corporate Watershed Leadership

Award went to Jenifer Christman with International Paper, for IP's 15-mile conservation easement on the Wolf River in Mississippi. For their efforts in developing the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Manatee Counties received the Community Watershed Award. The Special Projects Award went to the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation for their watershed restoration projects along the Oconaluftee and Ravens Fork Rivers.

The Southeast Watershed Forum is a cooperative effort among agencies, industries, and organizations to enhance local watershed initiatives by encouraging dialogue, communicating watershed information, providing training, and facilitating public-private partnerships. The Forum has convened three Roundtables to date. Feedback from the first two Roundtables has helped shape national watershed programs, increased agency awareness of local issues and concerns, and encouraged stronger local and regional partnerships.

For more information, contact Christine Olsenius, Coordinator, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1101 Market Street, CST 17D-Chattanooga, TN 37402, (410) 849-2975; e-mail: cholsenius@aol.com.

"This Roundtable provides a valuable service. It provides the 'NUT' that we all need; more Networking, greater Understanding and the opportunity to overcome Turf."

*Ross King, Assistant Director
Association County Commissioners of
Georgia*

California, from page 7

Lessons Learned

1. There should be such a thing as a "free lunch" time together as a valuable incentive and opportunity for diverse interests to communicate informally and to network in new ways.
2. Tackling state-local relationships was complex enough and more time was needed to adequately address the federal watershed management role, which is becoming increasingly complicated with new listings of endangered species and new TMDL requirements.
3. Participants must have a product to show for their involvement and a mutually comfortable strategy to continue to work on.
4. Translating new concepts that everyone agrees on into state action can still be problematic.
5. People in a state as large and diverse as California can find commonality of ideas and principles for watershed management.

A variety of public and private organizations contributed financially to make the forum series possible. Partners included the California Resources Agency, Californians and the Land, East Bay Municipal Utility District, For the Sake of the Salmon, U.C. Davis—Public Service Research Program, EPA, NOAA, and the U.S. Forest Service. For local watershed groups traveling a long distance, travel expenses were partially reimbursed when requested. Costs per forum ranged from \$3,300 to \$9,200, with project management and much administrative time donated by WMC.

For more information, contact Sari Sommarstrom, Watershed Management Council, c/o PSRP, Davis, One Shields Ave., Davis, CA 95616-8688, (530) 467-5783, email: sari@sisqtel.net web site: //watershed.org.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN WATERSHED COORDINATOR'S ROUNDTABLE

How successful is watershed coordination in the states of North and South Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and Montana? For 7 months, a 6-state Steering Committee telecommunicated to plan the first Rocky Mountain Watershed Coordinator's Roundtable, where answers to this and other questions were debated and discussed by 60 participants. Historic Chico Hot Springs Resort, just north of Yellowstone National Park, provided a relaxed and informal setting for the May 15–17, 2000, gathering of watershed coordinators and state and federal agency staff.

Monthly conference calls and e-mail were essential communication tools for the 12-member Steering Committee that planned the event. Composed of interested watershed coordinators and agency representatives in the six participating states of EPA Region 8, the Steering Committee built a Roundtable agenda to meet the needs of watershed groups of diverse character. The Montana Watercourse, a statewide water education program at Montana State University-Bozeman, coordinated the effort with funding support from the Department of Interior and EPA. Acting as facilitator, the Montana Watercourse drew from its prior experience, having conducted a successful retreat for Montana Watershed Coordinators in the fall of 1999.

Each of the six participating states sent three or more representatives to the Roundtable, including local watershed coordinators and state watershed managers, who described the status of their respective state's watershed groups, brainstormed common needs,

and learned from the experiences of neighboring states. Participants learned that although their needs clearly run the gamut from technical assistance to funding to training to public relations, these needs were, in large degree, common to all. The participants' collective priorities were then identified: (1) long-term funding for watershed group stability, (2) local support for and participation in watershed group activities, and (3) a broadly shared, clearly defined purpose and vision.

These three priority needs were shared with federal agency representatives, who were asked on the final day of the gathering to describe the *federal role* in addressing local watershed needs. Through an informal roundtable discussion, federal officials briefed local participants on existing program assistance, and they provided insights into future opportunities. A general Q&A session yielded some useful suggestions. For example, when asked, "How can watershed groups help federal agencies to increase funding levels to support their efforts?" the federal representatives responded, "Tell your success stories, generate products, and invest some time and dollars in reporting your results."

Peter Lavigne, Program Director of the Watershed Management Professional Program at Portland State University, gave a provocative keynote presentation, *Restorations, Quagmires, Watersheds and Consensus: Where Do We Go from Here?*, which cast watershed experience in the larger global context, challenging participants to continue to act locally, but never lose sight of the bigger picture.

The meeting concluded with a discussion about the lessons learned from the Roundtable, the value of a Rocky Mountain communication network,

and the benefits of a continuing interstate dialogue. All present agreed that the Roundtable was an enriching experience and that learning about the work of other watershed practitioners was especially valuable. Participants from Utah and Colorado were particularly interested in Montana's statewide coordination and communication network. It also became apparent that watershed priorities in the Dakotas differ considerably from those of the Rocky Mountain states, where a population boom is presently under way. The Roundtable concluded with a group decision to convene a small Focus Group to develop a set of recommendations for the National Watershed Forum in 2001. With assistance from River Network, a listserve was established to facilitate ongoing communications among the Roundtable participants.



One fringe benefit of the Roundtable was the field trips, which gave some participants a chance to see the Yellowstone Watershed firsthand. A whitewater-rafting trip kicked off the conference for the more adventurous; and a tamer, but instructive raft tour, at the meeting's conclusion, was led by members of Montana Governor Marc Racicot's Upper Yellowstone River Taskforce.

For more information, contact Mary Ellen Wolfe, Montana Watercourse, MSU, PO Box 170575, Bozeman, MT 59717, (406) 994-1910 or e-mail: mwolfe@montana.edu.

Updates

Enhanced Protections of Wetlands and Other Waters of the United States Under the Proposed "Tulloch" Clarification

Background

Wetlands provide a number of environmentally and economically important functions in watersheds, such as flood control, water quality protection, groundwater recharge, spawning areas for commercially important fish, and wildlife habitat. Wetlands loss and stream degradation can result in increased flooding and runoff, causing harm to downstream communities and property, pollution of rivers and streams, destruction of commercial fisheries, closures of shellfish beds, degradation of drinking water supplies, and loss of wildlife habitat. Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), a permit must be obtained before dredged or fill material may be discharged into wetlands and other "waters of the United States." This permit program ensures that the environmental impacts of proposed discharges are avoided and minimized to the extent possible, and that unavoidable impacts are *mitigated* or offset through wetlands restoration or other *compensatory mitigation activities*.

However, by using specialized dredging and disposal techniques such as backhoes with welded buckets, and placing excavated material directly on uplands or in sealed containers so as to avoid discharges of the excavated material, sophisticated developers have sought to convert wetlands without the need to obtain a CWA Section 404 permit. As a result, some small volume discharges associated with mechanized land clearing, ditching, channelization, or other mechanized excavation

activities were not consistently subject to environmental review under the Section 404 program even though waters of the United States, including wetlands, were destroyed or degraded.

In 1993, in an effort to better protect wetlands from these practices, EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) issued a regulation (commonly referred to as the "Tulloch rule") to revise the definition of "discharge of dredged material" to clarify that any redeposits of excavated materials incidental to these types of activities are subject to environmental reviews under the CWA. In a 1998 court decision, however, the Court found that EPA and the Corps lacked authority to regulate such activities if conducted so as to result in a way that results only in "incidental fallback" (excavated material that falls back into virtually the spot of removal). Since the Court's decision, an estimated 20,000 wetland acres have been targeted for ditching, draining, and destruction and approximately 150 miles of streams channelized without environmental review and without compensatory mitigation.

Proposed Revisions

On August 10, 2000, EPA and the Corps issued a proposed regulation to stem such losses by clarifying the scope of activities typically subject to environmental review under the CWA. Because mechanized excavation, channelization, and other mechanized ditch digging activities typically produce more than incidental fallback and result in a discharge of dredged material, the proposal establishes a *rebuttable presumption* that such activities are subject to CWA Section 404 permitting requirements. This rebuttable presumption of discharge can be overcome if it is shown on a case-by-case basis that the activity

was designed and conducted so as to result only in incidental fallback.

"Today's proposal will allow us to go as far we can through administrative reforms to close this loophole and protect wetlands. The action we take today strengthens the protection of vital resources for future generations."

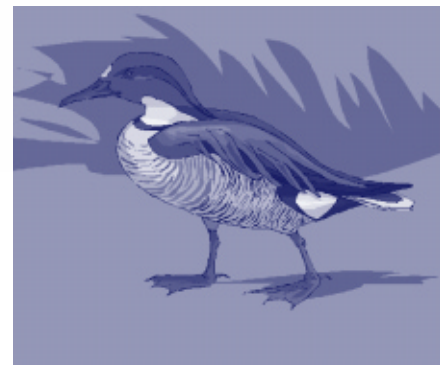
Carol Browner
EPA Administrator

Additional Protections for Wetlands

By clarifying what types of activities are likely to result in discharges that can be regulated, the proposed rule offers better protection to tens of thousands of wetlands acres and hundreds of miles of streams considered at risk. The resulting gap in environmental protection, however, cannot be completely rectified by rulemaking alone. Only a legislative fix to the Clean Water Act will fully address the gap resulting from the 1998 Court decision.

More Information

For general information on the proposed rule or wetlands, visit the EPA wetlands web site at www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands or contact the Wetlands Helpline at (703) 748-1304 or (800) 832-7828.



Unified Federal Policy on Watershed Management

On October 18, a new *Unified Federal Policy for a Watershed Approach to Federal Land and Resource Management* (UFP) was announced. The new policy seeks to protect and accelerate the restoration of watersheds on federal lands and is intended to promote the adoption of a common federal agency approach to managing watersheds on federal lands.

The final policy was developed by an interagency team composed of representatives of five departments (Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, and Interior) and three agencies (Environmental Protection Agency, Tennessee Valley Authority, and Army Corps of Engineers).

Two hundred and forty-eight responses from 126 organizations and 122 individuals were received on the draft policy, which was published in the *Federal Register* in October. The majority of the comments supported the goals and approach of the policy.

The UFP will serve as a framework for better coordination among federal agencies, states, tribes, private landowners, and interested stakeholders in the management of federal lands and resources using a watershed approach. It will promote management on a watershed basis to protect water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems on federal lands. The federal agencies will strive to work in close coordination with state, tribal, and local government agencies; private landowners; and stakeholders to develop implementation plans that will incorporate the goals of the policy and build on current efforts, while recognizing work already being accomplished by tribes, states, and local communities. The policy contains 18 principal objectives that fall into the following four major areas: (1) development of common water assessment procedures; (2) adoption of a water-

shed management approach; (3) improved consistency and compliance with federal, state, tribal, and interstate water quality requirements; and (4) enhanced collaboration with all stakeholders.

For more information on the UFP, visit the Clean Water Action Plan web site at www.cleanwater.gov.

Congress Agrees to Fund "Lands Legacy"

At press time, Congress agreed to fund President Clinton's Lands Legacy conservation program as part of the Interior Department spending bill for Fiscal Year 2001. However, supporters of a more generous bill, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), vowed to continue to push for consideration of a broader measure. CARA sponsor Senator Mary Landrieu (D-La.), who threatened to hold up the Interior spending bill, backed down only after receiving assurances from Congressional leaders that funding for coastal and wildlife conservation programs would be included in other appropriations bills.

The Interior bill (H.R. 4578) includes a new 6-year Land Conservation, Preservation and Infrastructure Improvement Trust Fund. The fund, financed by oil royalties, would provide \$1.6 billion in the first year, increasing to a total of \$2.4 billion in the sixth year, to go toward conservation programs. The trust fund would, however, be subject to annual Interior and Commerce-Justice-State appropriations.

The CARA bill (H.R. 701), on the other hand, would have set aside \$3 billion each year for 15 years toward coastal, wildlife, land acquisition, and other conservation programs and guaranteed the funding rather than making it subject to annual appropriations.

Under the new trust fund, federal and state sides of the Land and Water Conservation Fund could receive up to

\$540 million; state conservation programs could garner \$300 million; and urban parks and forestry and historic preservation funds could get \$160 million. Another \$400 million for coastal assistance is expected to be included in the Commerce-Justice-State bill.

Estuary Restoration Bill in Conference

At press time, a joint House/Senate conference committee was working to reconcile differences between House- and Senate-passed measures aimed at restoring estuary habitat.

S. 835, the Estuary Habitat and Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act, passed the Senate this spring and the House last month, but the bills have some fundamental differences.

The Senate passed S. 835 to authorize the National Estuary Partnership Act, but attached three other Senate bills, which reauthorize the Long Island Sound and Chesapeake Bay restoration projects as well as the National Estuary Program. When the House passed its version last month, it added six other bills, including H.R. 673 to improve Florida Keys water quality; H.R. 2957 to restore Lake Pontchartrain in Louisiana; H.R. 1106 for alternative water sources; H.R. 2328 to reauthorize the clean lakes program; H.R. 4104 to restore the Mississippi Sound; and H.R. 3378 for cleanup of the Tijuana estuary. The White House said the president will reserve judgment on the legislation until he sees the final version.

B.E.A.C.H. Bill Signed

On October 10, President Clinton signed into law S. 522, the Beaches Environmental Awareness and Coastal Health Act of 2000 (B.E.A.C.H. bill), sponsored by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ). The B.E.A.C.H. bill establishes consistent nationwide standards for beach water quality monitoring, testing, and notification.

Water Drop Patch Project Gains in Popularity with Girl Scouts

A unique partnership project between the Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) and EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds, is quickly gaining in popularity. Since March of last year, more than 5,000 Girl Scouts nationwide have earned Water Drop Patches. And last fall, the National Environmental Education Training Foundation (NEETF) recognized the project by presenting a National Environmental Educational Achievement Award to the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital, where the project was first championed by program specialist Karen Brown.

Over the summer, a number of Girl Scout camps chose the Water Drop Patch Project as part of their Day Camp programs. At Camp Shantituck in Kentucky, led by Camp Program Director Susan Lange, Girl Scouts learned all about nonpoint source pollution. The girls conducted stream assessments, chemical testing, and biological monitoring of the two creeks that run through the camp. They sampled for nitrates, coliform, dissolved oxygen, and pH levels; used a topographic map to locate farms, water sewage treatment plants, and other potential sources of nonpoint pollution further upstream; and identified several types of macroinvertebrates.

Now that the Girl Scouts have identified the types of pollution, they are focusing on learning where the pollutants enter their creeks and how they can help keep them clean, such as providing buffers and community education. The Girl Scouts will continue to monitor quarterly and report their findings to the Kentucky Division of Water, which records their

data. Through a Clean Water Act 319(h) grant provided to the Kentucky Waterways Alliance, the Girl Scouts received funding to cover their supplies. While at Camp Shantituck, all Brownie, Junior, and Cadettes campers received the Water Drop Patch. Senior Girl Scouts assisted the younger girls with many of the activities.

Troop Leader Patty Murphy's Brownie Troop Number 2260 in Hollis, Maine, learned all about the importance of watershed protection by doing the Water Drop Patch Project. But best of all, she said, was the discovery that protecting the environment can be fun. Among



many water-related activities, the Brownies went on a stream walk, put up a wall mural of water posters at their school, and visited a wildlife refuge, a hatchery, and a hydroelectric dam.

To help the Girl Scouts get started, EPA published a Water Drop Patch Project booklet providing background information on watersheds, nonpoint source pollution, wetlands, and groundwater/drinking water; a list of resources and helpful web sites; and a glossary. The

booklet can be ordered for free by calling EPA's National Service Center for Environmental Publications at (800) 490-9198. Ask for EPA Publication Number EPA-840-B-99-004 or download it from the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/adopt/patch>.

Thanks to a Memorandum of Understanding, several federal agencies, including EPA, are working cooperatively with GSUSA to provide conservation and environmental education programs for Girl Scouts under an exciting project called "Linking Girls to the Land." For additional information on the Patch project or "Linking Girls to the Land," contact Patty Scott, EPA, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20460, (202) 260-1956, e-mail: scott.patricia@epa.gov.

New Students and Teacher's Page

A new EPA web site is now available for students and teachers looking for information on water-related environmental education programs. The site highlights some of EPA's best educational materials as well as links to resources by other Federal agencies, including outstanding materials available from the United States Geological Survey and the Department of Agriculture. Students and teachers can also use the site to find out about top-rated water curriculum by others. Be sure to visit www.epa.gov/adopt/education.html. Comments on the new site can be directed to: scott.patricia@epa.gov.

New Resources....

EnviroScape® Introduces New Watershed Kit

Individuals or small groups will have fun creating their own painted plaster watershed (and buildings) with a new Make Your Own Watershed Kit.

Modeled after the award-winning, hands-on EnviroScape® models used internationally by schools and communities, EnviroScape®'s Make Your Own Watershed Kit supplements the popular model by offering a creative base for homework assignments or science projects. Students will be able to experiment with activities (in English and Spanish) that help them learn how to prevent water pollution.

The patented kit includes two plaster molds, plaster, paint, paint brushes, bridges, felt strips (for vegetation), and instructions with activities. The 12-inch-square watershed mold can be reused.

For more information, contact EnviroScape®, c/o JT&A, 14524-F Lee Road, Chantilly, VA 20151, (703) 631-8810 ext.10, fax: (703) 631-6558, or see the web site at www.watershedkit.com.

Urban Stream Restoration Video

A new video offers a tour of six urban stream restoration sites, led by Ann Riley, a nationally recognized hydrologist, stream restoration professional, and executive director of the Waterways Restoration Institute in Berkeley, California. The video provides information on principles of stream restoration, community involvement, and project financing. It is recommended for anyone interested in ecological urban stream and neighborhood restoration. For more information, visit the web site at www.urbanstreamrestoration.com.

NRDC Issues New Report on Stormwater Strategies

Stormwater runoff is a serious threat to our nation's waters. Forty percent of

our nation's surveyed waterways are impaired; many because of stormwater pollution. While the impacts are significant, the problems are not intractable. Increasingly, communities are implementing stormwater control strategies and realizing the environmental, economic, and social benefits of preventing runoff pollution, often without any mandate. In a recent report entitled *Stormwater Strategies: Community Responses to Runoff Pollution*, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) identifies numerous tools and approaches already in use that control or prevent polluted stormwater runoff. The report highlights more than 150 examples of environmentally effective and economically advantageous stormwater strategies being employed by municipalities, developers, and community organizations in a variety of settings across the country. *Stormwater Strategies* shows that when motivated, local governments are able to develop strong, cost-effective programs to fight this problem.

NRDC is working with local and regional organizations to bring this information to community leaders and interested citizens and is available to make presentations at meetings, workshops, or events. The target audience includes elected and appointed government officials, members of the development community, professional organizations, citizen advisory committees, conservation organizations, watershed groups, and the public at large. NRDC's stormwater outreach provides a unique opportunity to learn about proven strategies that will help meet federal Phase II stormwater program and other watershed requirements.

For additional information, contact George Aponte Clarke, (212) 727-4413, e-mail: gaclarke@nrdc.org. *Stormwater Strategies* is available through NRDC's publications department (212-727-4486) for \$14.00 plus S&H or on the web at www.nrdc.org (search for stormwater).

Tribal Wetland Program Highlights Released

A new publication, *Tribal Wetland Program Highlights*, represents a milestone in EPA's ongoing effort to support the development of comprehensive tribal wetland programs. Eleven case studies are presented which highlight the experiences of tribal organizations and feature varying components of tribal programs, including tools and strategies currently employed to protect and restore wetlands and watersheds. These case studies are presented so that tribes, as well as state and local governments, can learn from the experience of others. Copies of the publication can be ordered from the Wetlands Helpline by calling 1-800-832-7828 or faxing a request to 703-748-1308. The publication will soon be on the OWOW website at www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands.

Community-Based Environmental Protection (CBEP) News ON-LINE

CBEP News On-Line (CNO) is a periodic electronic information bulletin from EPA's Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation. Story suggestions, announcements and information for CNO may be sent to the editor, Jerry Filbin, at filbin.gerald@epa.gov. To be added to the distribution list, contact the editor at the above e-mail address. Past issues of CNO can be found at www.epa.gov/ecocommunity/news.htm.

Events...

November 2000

13–15 *Asking the Right Questions: Evaluating the Impact of Groundwater Education*, Nebraska City, NE. Sponsored by The Groundwater Foundation. Contact Cindy Kreifels at (800)858-4844; e-mail: cindy@groundwater.org.

27–30 *Managing Watersheds in the New Century*, Monterey, CA. Sponsored by the Watershed Management Council, PSRP UC Davis, One Shields Ave., Davis, CA 95616. Phone: (510) 273-9066; e-mail: mc@watershed.org; web site: www.watershed.org.wmc

17–19 *California Farm Conference*, Santa Rosa, CA. Contact Marcie Rosenzweig at (530) 888-9206; e-mail: fullcircle@jps.net; web site: www.CaliforniaFarmConference.com.

27–28 *EECO 2000—Environment*, Toronto, ON, Canada. EECO 2000 will profile corporations that have developed imaginative initiatives, innovative programs, and improved processes to government policy makers, clients, competitors, investors, and the general public. Contact Bree Stanlake, Globe Foundation of Canada, 504, 999 Canada Place, Vancouver, BC V6E 3. Phone: (604)775-7300; e-mail: info@eeco.apfnet.org; web site: www.eeco2000.com

30 *Assessing and Managing Mercury from Historic and Current Mining Activities*, San Francisco, CA. Contact Alina Martin, EPA at (703)318-4678; Fax: 703-736-0826; web site: www.epa.gov/tbnrml/hgmining.htm.

30–Dec. 2 *Workshop—Promoting Participation in Community Development*, Knoxville, TN. Sponsored by the University of Tennessee. Visit the web site: www.ra.utk.edu/cpc.

January 2001

7–9 *Integrated Decision-Making for Watershed Management Symposium*, 4-H Center, Chevy Chase, MD. Visit the web site: www.conted.vt.edu/watershed.htm.

13–14 *Media Skills Workshop*, Knoxville, TN. Sponsored by Alabama Rivers Alliance, Clean Water Network and others. Contact Catherine Sheehy at (865)494-9786; e-mail: catherine@tngreen; web site: www.tcwn.org. (The workshop is also being offered in Atlanta, GA (Jan. 27-28); Birmingham, AL (Feb. 17-18); and New Orleans, LA (March 24-25).

22–26 *Working at the Watershed Level*, Fresno, CA. Sponsored by the Interagency Watershed Training Cooperative. Visit the web site: www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sjd/sjrmp/workshop/index-2001.html.

March 2001

1–31 *Workshop and Training Session: Restoring Streams, Riparian Areas and Floodplains in the Southwest*, Albuquerque, NM. Sponsored by Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA, EPA, and others. Contact Jon Kusler at (518) 872-1804; e-mail: aswm@aswm.org.

21–23 *10th Annual Southeastern Lakes Management Conference*, Knoxville, TN. Sponsored by the North American Lake

Management Society and the Southeast Watershed Forum. Contact Sue Robertson, TVA, at (423) 751-3747; e-mail: ssrobertson@tva.gov, web site: www.don-anderson.com/senalms2001.

25–29 *Seventh Federal Interagency Sedimentation Conference*, Reno, NV. Contact Marlene Johnson, FISC Registration, Denver Federal Center, P.O. Box 25007 (D-6700), Denver, CO 80225-0007. Phone: (303) 445-2117; fax: (303) 445-6323; e-mail: mjohanson@do.usbr.gov.

April 2001

7 *Enhancing the States' Lake Management Programs—Integrating Nonpoint Source Watershed Management with Lake Management and Protection*, Chicago, IL. Contact Bob Kirschner, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Rd., Glencoe, IL 60022. Phone: (847) 835-6837; Fax: (847) 835-1635; e-mail: bkirschn@chicagobotanic.org.

June–July 2001

June 27– *National Watershed Forum*.
July 1 Hyatt Regency in Arlington (Crystal City), VA. Visit Meridian Institute's web site: www.merid.org.

July 30– *Managing River Flows for Biodiversity: A Conference on Science, Policy and Conservation Action*, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO. Visit the web site: www.freshwaters.org/conference.

Action Plan to Address Gulf “Dead Zone”

Along the Gulf of Mexico’s Texas-Louisiana Shelf, an area of hypoxia forms during the summer months. This area, often referred to as the “dead zone,” is characterized by reduced sunlight and decreased oxygen levels in the water, adversely affecting aquatic life. Scientific evidence indicates that excess nitrogen from the 31-state Mississippi/Atchafalaya Rivers drainage basin drives the onset and duration of hypoxia. It affects up to 7,728 square miles off Louisiana’s coast, an area that is one of the nation’s most productive fisheries (responsible for approximately 40 percent of U.S. fisheries landings). The engineering of the Mississippi River system and separation of rivers from their floodplains contribute to the hypoxia problem. Instead of water borne nutrients flooding and nourishing these floodplains, the nutrients are swiftly carried to the Gulf.

For the past four years, the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force, chaired by EPA and comprised of 9 states, 2 tribes, and 9 other federal agencies, has worked to develop an Action Plan to reduce Gulf hypoxia. Mid-way through this process, Congress passed the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act. This legislative endorsement, accompanied by specific requirements and timeframes, has guided recent Task Force efforts. In June 2000, the Task Force published a draft Action Plan, and in October 2000, consensus was reached on a Final Action Plan. A major goal of the Plan is to significantly reduce the size of the hypoxic zone to less than 1,930 square miles by 2015. Further, the Action Plan aims for a 30 percent reduction in the discharge of nitrogen to the Gulf. These reductions can be achieved through specific strategies to be developed within two years by states and tribes on a watershed basis. The Final Action Plan should be ready for the President to transmit to Congress later this year.

Views expressed in *Watershed Events* do not necessarily reflect those of EPA. In addition, mention of commercial products or publications does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use by EPA.



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