

A Short Introduction to the...



Water Elements of the New EPA Strategic Plan

EPA has a new Strategic Plan charting a course for the Agency over the next five years (2004 - 2008). The new plan is organized around five key goals –

- Clean Air and Global Climate Change;
- Clean and Safe Water;
- Land Preservation and Restoration;
- Healthy Communities and Ecosystems; and
- Compliance and Environmental Stewardship.

The Clean and Safe Water goal of the new Strategic Plan states:

Ensure drinking water is safe. Restore and maintain oceans, watersheds, and their aquatic ecosystems to protect human health, support economic and recreational activities, and provide healthy habitat for fish, plants, and wildlife.

Within the Clean and Safe Water goal, there are specific objectives for protecting human health and protecting water quality. In addition, some key water programs, such as protection of wetlands, estuaries, and great waterbodies, (e.g the Great Lakes), are addressed in the Healthy Communities and Ecosystems goal. The attached chart shows the water elements of the new Strategic Plan.

THEMES

Three key themes guided development of the water elements of the new plan –

- focus on specific improvements in the degree of protection of public health and condition of waters we hope to accomplish by 2008;
- work closely with States, Tribes, stakeholders, and the public; and
- promote more effective cooperation among EPA programs and with the related programs of other Federal agencies.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

With the help of States, Tribes and other partners, EPA expects to make significant progress toward protecting human health and improving water quality by 2008 including –

- **Water Safe to Drink:** increase the rate of compliance with drinking water standards from 93% to 95%;
- **Fish and Shellfish Safe to Eat:** reduce pollution in waters with fish advisories so that consumption limits can be relaxed for 3% of problem waters while increasing the percentage of shellfishing acres that are approved for use from 77 to 85%;
- **Water Safe for Swimming:** restore polluted waters to allow swimming again in at least 5% of the waters where swimming is now unsafe;
- **Healthy Watersheds:** restore polluted waters so that, of the 2,262 major watersheds across the Nation, at least 600 have few remaining problems (i.e. at least 80% of assessed waters meet State water quality standards);
- **Healthy Coastal Waters:** show steady improvement in seven specific indicators of the health of each of the four major coastal ecosystems around the country; and
- **More Wetlands:** achieve a net increase of 400,000 acres of wetlands.

Each of these major subobjectives is supported by additional “strategic targets” that further define expected improvements in human health and water quality by 2008. In addition, the Healthy Communities and Ecosystems goal includes specific expectations of progress to be made by 2008 in critical estuaries, the Mexico Border area, the Gulf of Mexico, the Great Lakes, and the Chesapeake Bay.

WHAT'S THE STRATEGY?

The new Strategic Plan describes, in general terms, how we expect to accomplish each of the health and environmental goals for 2008. Some of the common elements of these strategies are –

- **Describe Core Water Programs:** Strategies describe how the core national programs will contribute to meeting the objectives and subobjectives (e.g. State Revolving Funds, nonpoint pollution control grants, standards, source water protection, discharge permits, etc.).

- **Describe Key Reporting Measures:** For each core program, a minimum number of measures are identified addressing key program activities. Some of these measures will require reporting by States and Tribes and many include targets to be accomplished by 2008.
- **Engage Other EPA Programs:** The Strategic Plan describes how core water programs will complement one another (e.g. clean water program support safer drinking water). The strategy also explains how core water programs will be supplemented with the work of other national EPA programs (e.g. research, compliance assistance, pesticides etc.).
- **Develop Innovations:** Throughout the Strategic Plan, innovations in programs are identified and fosters (e.g. cost savings attainable through water quality trading and development of watershed permits).
- **Mobilize Other Federal Resources:** The Strategic Plan identifies ways to mobilize the resources of other Federal agencies to support water goals (e.g. Farm Bill resources through the Department of Agriculture, support for Tribal water quality through the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

NEXT STEPS

Key steps to implement the new Strategic Plan include –

- starting this Fall, Headquarters and Regional offices will form teams to develop FY 05 implementation plans for the ten key water subobjectives;
- in the Spring, Regions will work with States to define State-specific commitments for accomplishments and program activities in FY 05; and
- in April of next year, the first of a series of mid-year and end-of-year assessments of program performance will be completed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The full text of the new Strategic Plan is available on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/ocfopage/plan/plan.htm>. You can find more information about the water elements of the new Strategic Plan at the “Strategic Plan” icon on the Office of Water homepage.

KEY WATER OBJECTIVES/SUBOBJECTIVES IN THE NEW EPA STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 2: Clean and Safe Water

Protect Human Health

- Water Safe to Drink
- Fish/Shellfish Safe to Eat
- Water Safe for Swimming

Protect Water Quality

- Improve Water Quality
On a Watershed Basis
- Improve Coastal and
Ocean Waters

Goal 4: Heathy Communities and Ecosystems

Protect Community Health

- US/Mexico Border

Protect Ecosystems

- Ecosystem Scale Protection
(Estuaries and Wetlands)
- Protect the Great Lakes
- Protect Chesapeake Bay
- Protect the Gulf of Mexico