

## **Section A**

# **General Basinwide Information**



# Chapter 1 - Introduction to Basinwide Water Quality Planning

## 1.1 What is Basinwide Water Quality Planning?

Basinwide water quality planning is a nonregulatory watershed-based approach to restoring and protecting the quality of North Carolina's surface waters. Basinwide water quality plans are prepared by the NC Division of Water Quality for each of the seventeen major river basins in the state, as shown in Figure A-1 and Table A-1. Preparation of an individual basinwide management plan is a five-year process, which is broken down into four major phases as presented in Table A-2. While these plans are prepared by the Division of Water Quality, their implementation and the protection of water quality entails the coordinated efforts of many agencies, local governments and stakeholder groups in the state. The first round of plans was completed in 1998. Each plan is now being updated at five-year intervals during round two.

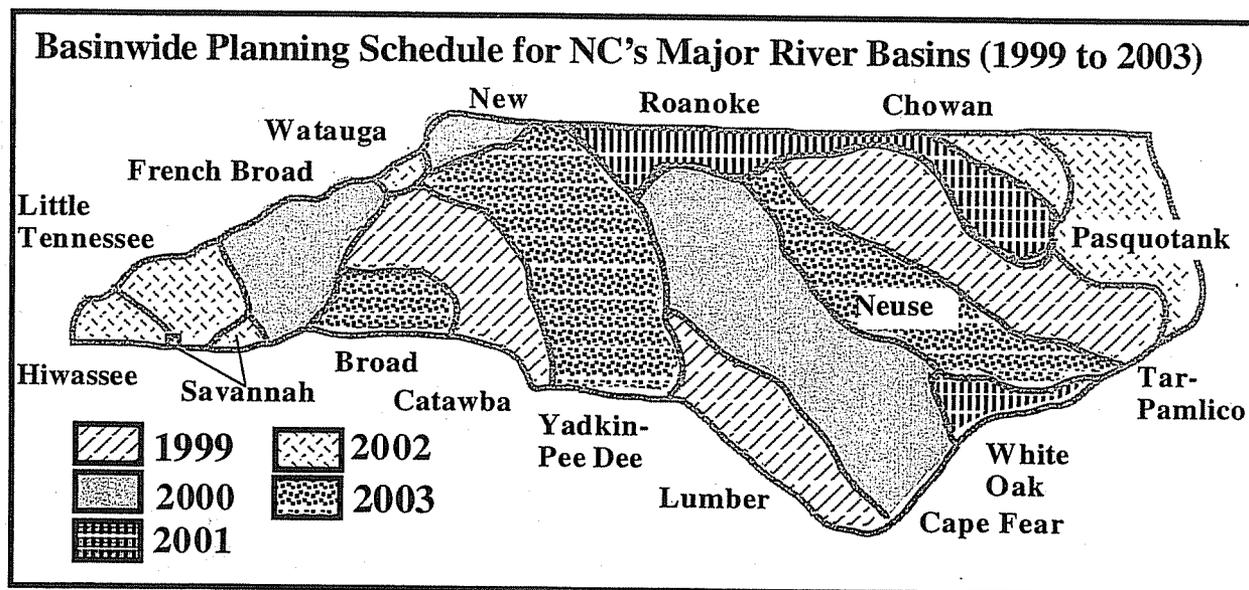


Figure A-1 Basinwide Planning Schedule (1999 to 2003)

## 1.2 Goals of Basinwide Water Quality Planning

The goals of basinwide management are to:

- identify water quality problems and restore full use to impaired waters;
- identify and protect high value resource waters;
- protect unimpaired waters while allowing for reasonable economic growth;
- develop appropriate management strategies;
- assure equitable distribution of waste assimilative capacity for dischargers; and
- improve public awareness and involvement in the management of the state's surface waters.

Table A-1 Schedule for Second Round of Basinwide Planning (1998 to 2003)

Basin	DQW Biological Data Collection	In-House Draft Due For Staff Review	EMC/WQC Approval For Public Meetings	Public Mtg. and Draft Out For Review	Final Plan Receives EMC Approval	Begin NPDES Permit Issuance
Neuse	Summer 95	7/1998	7/1998	9/1998	12/1998	1/1999
Lumber	Summer 96	8/1998	12/1998	2/1999	5/1999	11/1999
Tar-Pamlico	Summer 97	8/1998	2/1999	4/1999	7/1999	1/2000
Catawba	Summer 97	5/1999	7/1999	9/1999	12/1999	3/2000
French Broad	Summer 97	8/1999	10/1999	12/1999	3/2000	8/2000
New	Summer 98	9/1999	12/1999	2/2000	5/2000	11/2000
Cape Fear	Summer 98	10/1999	2/2000	4/2000	7/2000	12/2000
Roanoke	Summer 99	8/2000	12/2000	2/2001	7/2001	1/2002
White Oak	Summer 99	2/2001	7/2001	9/2001	12/2001	6/2002
Savannah	Summer 99	6/2001	9/2001	11/2001	2/2002	8/2002
Watauga	Summer 99	6/2001	10/2001	12/2001	3/2002	9/2002
Little Tenn.	Summer 99	6/2001	9/2001	11/2001	2/2002	10/2002
Hiwassee	Summer 99	6/2001	9/2001	11/2001	2/2002	8/2002
Chowan	Summer 2000	7/2001	10/2001	1/2002	5/2002	11/2002
Pasquotank	Summer 2000	7/2001	10/2001	1/2002	5/2002	12/2002
Broad	Summer 2000	4/2002	7/2002	9/2002	12/2002	7/2003
Yadkin	Summer 2001	4/2002	9/2002	12/2002	3/2003	9/2003

Note: A basinwide plan was completed for all 17 basins during Round 1 (1993 and 1998).

Table A-2 Five-Year Process for Development of an Individual Basinwide Management Plan

<p><b>Years 1 to 3</b></p> <p><b>Water Quality Data Collection and Identification of Goals and Issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify sampling needs</li> <li>Canvass for information</li> <li>Coordinate with other agencies and local interest groups to establish goals and objectives and identify and prioritize issues</li> <li>Summarize data from ambient monitoring stations</li> <li>Conduct biological monitoring activities</li> <li>Conduct special studies and other water quality sampling activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Years 3 to 4</b></p> <p><b>Data Assessment and Model Preparation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather data from special studies to prepare models and TMDLs</li> <li>Develop preliminary pollution control strategies</li> <li>Coordinate with local stakeholders and other agencies</li> <li>Develop use support ratings</li> </ul>
<p><b>Year 4</b></p> <p><b>Preparation of Draft Basinwide Plan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop draft basinwide plan based on water quality data, use support ratings, modeling data and recommended pollution control strategies</li> <li>Present preliminary findings at informal meetings and incorporate comments into draft plan</li> </ul>
<p><b>Year 5</b></p> <p><b>Public Review and Approval of Plan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circulate draft plan for review</li> <li>Hold public meetings after approval by NC Environmental Management Commission's Water Quality Committee</li> <li>Revise plan after public review period</li> <li>Submit final document to Environmental Management Commission for approval</li> <li>Begin basinwide permitting and implementation at end of Year 5</li> </ul>

## 1.3 Major Components of the Basinwide Plan

The second round of basinwide plans uses a different format from the earlier basinwide plans. Each plan is subdivided into three major sections. The intent of the format change is to make the plans easier to read and understand, but still comprehensive in content.

### Section A: Basinwide Information

- Introduces the basinwide planning approach used by the state.
- Provides an overview of the river basin including: hydrology, land use, local government jurisdictions, population and growth trends, natural resources, wastewater discharges, animal operations and water usage.
- Presents general water quality information including summaries of water quality monitoring programs and use support ratings in the basin.

### Section B: Subbasin Information

- Summarizes recommendations from first basin plan, achievements made, what wasn't achieved and why, current priority issues and concerns, and goals and recommendations for the next five years by subbasin.

### Section C: Current and Future Initiatives

- Presents current and future water quality initiatives and success stories by federal, state and local agencies, and corporate, citizen and academic efforts.
- Describes DWQ goals and initiatives beyond the five-year planning cycle for the basin.

## 1.4 Features of Basinwide Water Quality Planning

Basinwide water quality planning is a complex and comprehensive effort with many "moving parts". Some major features of this program include:

- increased opportunity for public participation in the state's water quality planning;
- a focused effort on one river basin at a time across the state;
- basinwide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting;
- integration of existing point and nonpoint source regulatory programs;
- preparation of basinwide water quality plans for each of the state's 17 river basins;
- five-year planning cycles.

## 1.5 Benefits of Basinwide Water Quality Planning

Several benefits of basinwide planning and management to water quality include:

- *Improved efficiency.* The state's efforts and resources are focused on one river basin at a time.
- *Increased effectiveness.* The basinwide approach is in agreement with basic ecological principles.

- *Better consistency and equability.* By clearly defining the program's long-term goals and approaches, basinwide plans encourage *consistent* decision-making on permits and water quality improvement strategies.
- *Increased public awareness of the state's water quality protection programs.* The basinwide plans are an educational tool for increasing public awareness of water quality issues.
- *Increased integration of point and nonpoint source pollution assessment and controls.* Once waste loadings from both point and nonpoint sources are established, management strategies can be developed to ensure compliance with water quality standards.

## 1.6 How to Get Involved

To assure that basinwide plans are accurately written and effectively implemented, it is important for citizens and other local stakeholders to participate in the planning process. DWQ offers two opportunities for the public to participate in the process:

- Public workshops: Held prior to writing the basinwide plans. DWQ staff present information about basinwide planning and the water quality of the basin. Participants then break into smaller groups where they can ask questions, share their concerns, and discuss potential solutions to water quality issues in the basin.
- Public meetings: Held after the draft basinwide plan has been approved by the Water Quality Committee of the Environmental Management Commission. DWQ staff present more detailed information about the draft basinwide plan and its major recommendations. Then, the public is invited to comment and ask questions.
- Public Comment Period: Held after the draft plan has been approved by the Water Quality Committee of the Environmental Management Commission. The comment period is at least thirty days in length from the date of the first public meeting.

Citizens seeking involvement in efforts to restore and protect water quality can call the DWQ Planning Branch at (919) 733-5083 and ask to speak to the basinwide planner for your river basin.

## 1.7 Other References

There are several reference documents that provide additional information about basinwide planning and the basin's water quality:

- *Catawba River Basinwide Assessment Report.* August 1998. This technical report presents the physical, chemical and biological data in the Catawba River basin. 218 pages.
- *Catawba River Basinwide Water Quality Management Plan.* February 1995. This first basinwide plan for the Catawba River basin presents water quality data, information and recommended management strategies for the first five-year cycle. 197 pages.
- NC Division of Water Quality Basinwide Planning Website at <http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/>. Then click on Water Quality Section and scroll down the menu to Basinwide Planning Program.
- NC Division of Water Quality Environmental Sciences Branch Website at <http://esb.ehnr.state.nc.us/BAU.html>.

- *A Guide to Water Quality in North Carolina*. This document will be available soon. The document will include general information about water quality issues and programs to address these issues. It is intended to be an informational document on water quality.
- *North Carolina's Basinwide Approach to Water Quality Management: Program Description*. Creager, C.S. and J.P. Baker. 1991. DWQ Water Quality Section. Raleigh, NC.
- *NC Basinwide Wetlands and Riparian Restoration Plan for the Catawba River Basin*. DWQ NC Wetlands Restoration Program. Raleigh, NC.

Anyone interested in receiving these documents can contact the DWQ Planning Branch at (919) 733-5083.

## 1.8 Division of Water Quality Functions and Locations

The major activities coordinated by DWQ through basinwide planning are listed in Figure A-2. Information on the location, address and phone numbers for each branch and regional office are also shown in Figure A-2 and Figure A-3.

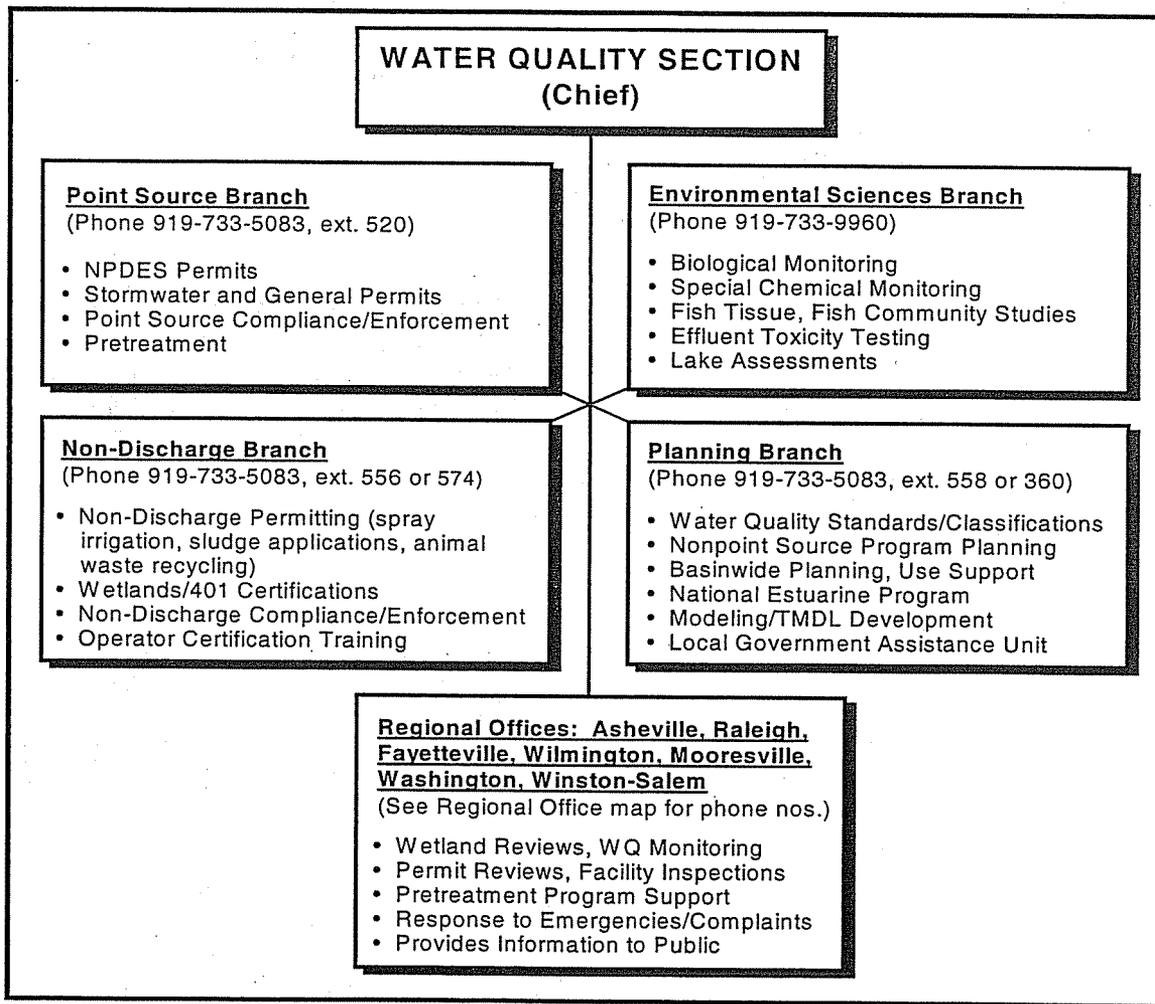


Figure A-2 Water Quality Section Organization Structure

