CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose this Basinwide Water Quality Management Plan is to report to citizens, policy makers and the regulated community on

- the current status of surface water quality in the basin,
- major water quality concerns and issues,
- projected trends in development and water quality,
- the long-range water quality goals for the basin, and
- recommended point and nonpoint source management options.

This Plan presents strategies for management of point sources and nonpoint sources of pollution. Section 1.2 provides an overview of the plan format to assist in the use and understanding of the document. It is one of a series of basinwide water quality management plans that are being prepared by the Water Quality Section of the North Carolina Division of Environmental Management (DEM). Plans will be prepared for all seventeen of the state's major river basins over the next five years as shown in Figure 1.1. An introduction to the basinwide management approach and a statewide basinwide permitting schedule are presented in Section 1.3.

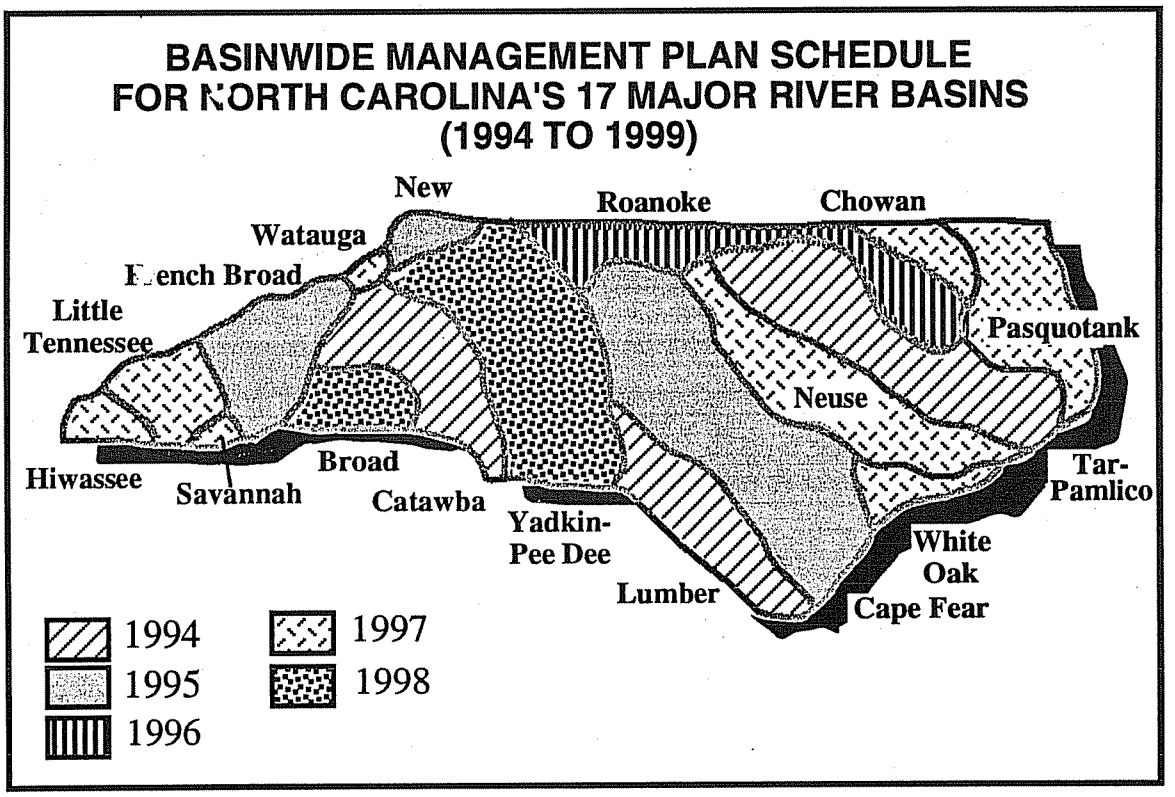

Figure 1.1 Basinwide Management Plan Schedule (1994 to 1999)

1.2 GUIDE TO USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

CHAPTER 1: Introduction - This chapter provides a non-technical description of the purpose of this plan, the basinwide water quality management approach and how this approach will be administered through DEM's Water Quality Section. The description of the basinwide management approach is based primarily on a 54-page document entitled *North Carolina's Basinwide Approach to Water Quality Management: Program Description - Final Report/August 1991* (Creager and Baker, 1991).

CHAPTER 2: General Basin Description - This chapter provides a general description of the basin. Some of the specific topics covered include:

- an overview of the major features such as location, rainfall, population, physiography, etc.
- hydrology of the basin and its eight subbasins
- a summary of land cover within the basin based on results of a 1982 and 1992 Nationwide Resources Inventory (NRI) conducted by the US Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service.
- population growth trends and densities by subbasin using 1970, '80 and '90 census data.
- major water uses in the basin and DEM's program of water quality classifications and standards.

CHAPTER 3: Causes and Sources of Water Pollution in the Basin - Chapter 3 discusses the causes and probable sources of surface water degradation in the basin. It describes both point and nonpoint sources of pollution as well as a number of important causes of water quality impacts including sediment, biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), toxic substances, nutrients, color, fecal coliform bacteria and others. It also discusses pollutant loading in the basin and generally discusses water quality problem areas.

CHAPTER 4: Water Quality Status in the Basin - Data generated by DEM on water quality and biological communities are reviewed and interpreted in this chapter in order to assess current conditions and the status of surface waters within the basin. The chapter describes the various types of water quality monitoring conducted by DEM, summarizes water quality in each of the eight subbasins in the basin and presents a summary of use support ratings for those surface waters that have been monitored or evaluated.

CHAPTER 5: Existing Point and Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Programs - Chapter 5 summarizes the existing point and nonpoint source control programs available to address water quality problems. These programs represent the management tools available for addressing the priority water quality concerns and issues that are identified in Chapter 6. Chapter 5 also describes the concept of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). TMDLs represent management strategies aimed at controlling point and nonpoint source pollutants on various water bodies within the basin.

CHAPTER 6: Basinwide Goals, Major Water Quality Concerns and Recommended Management Strategies - Water quality issues identified in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are evaluated and prioritized based on use-support ratings, degree of impairment, and the sensitivity of the aquatic resources being affected. Recommended management strategies, or TMDLs, are then presented that describe how the available water quality management tools and strategies described in Chapter 5 will be applied in the basin. This includes generalized wasteload allocations for dischargers (for nutrients and biochemical oxygen demand (BOD)) and recommended programs and best management practices for controlling nonpoint sources.

1.3 NORTH CAROLINA'S BASINWIDE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Introduction - Basinwide water quality management is a watershed-based management approach being implemented by DEM which features basinwide permitting, integrating existing point and nonpoint source control programs, and preparing basinwide management plan reports.

DEM is applying this approach to each of the seventeen major river basins in the state as a means of better identifying water quality problems, developing appropriate management strategies, maintaining and protecting water quality and aquatic habitat, and assuring equitable distribution of waste assimilative capacity for dischargers. Other important benefits of the basinwide approach include improved efficiency, increased cost-effectiveness, better consistency and equitability, and improved public awareness and involvement in management of the state's surface waters.

A basinwide management plan document is prepared for each basin. The plans are circulated for public review and are presented at public meetings in each river basin. The management plan for a given basin is completed and approved preceding the scheduled date for basinwide permit renewals in that basin. The plans are then to be evaluated, based on followup water quality monitoring, and updated at five year intervals thereafter.

DEM began formulating the idea of basinwide management in the late 1980s, established a basin permitting schedule and began basinwide monitoring activities in 1990, and published a basinwide program description in August 1991. Basinwide management entails coordinating and integrating, by major river basin, DEM's Water quality program activities. These activities, which are discussed further in Section 1.4, include permitting, monitoring, modeling, nonpoint source assessments, and planning.

Water Quality Program Benefits - Several benefits of basinwide planning and management to North Carolina's Water quality program include: (1) *improved program efficiency,* (2) *increased effectiveness*, (3) better *consistency and equitability* and (4) *increased public awareness of the state's water quality protection programs.* First, by reducing the area of the state covered each year, monitoring, modeling, and permitting efforts can be focused. As a result, *efficiency increases* and more can be achieved for a given level of funding and resource allocation. Second, the basinwide approach is in consonance with basic ecological principles of watershed management, leading to *more effective* water quality assessment and management. Linkages between aquatic and terrestrial systems are addressed (e.g., contributions from nonpoint sources) and all inputs to aquatic systems, and potential interactive, synergistic and cumulative effects, are considered. Third, the basinwide plans will provide a focus for management decisions. By clearly defining the program's long-term goals and approaches, these plans will encourage *consistent* decision-making on permits and water quality improvement strategies. Consistency, together with greater attention to long-range planning, in turn will promote a *more equitable* distribution of assimilative capacity, explicitly addressing the trade-offs among pollutant sources (point and nonpoint) and allowances for economic growth.

Basinwide management will also promote integrating 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 prevent overloading of the receiving waters and to allow for a reasonable margin of safety to ensure compliance with water quality standards.

Basinwide Planning Schedule - The following table presents the overall basin schedule for all 17 major river basins in the state. Included are the dates for permit reissuance and the dates by which management plans are to be completed for each basin.

Table 1.1 Basinwide Permitting and Planning Schedule for North Carolina's 17 Major River Basins (1993 through 1998).

Basin	Discharge Permits to be Issued	Target Date for Basin Plan Approval	Basin	Discharge Permits to be Issued	Target Date for Basin Plan Approval
Neuse	4/93	2/93 (approved)	Roanoke	1/97	7/96
			White Oak	6/97	1/97
Lumber	11/94	5/94 (approved)	Savannah	8/97	4/97
			Watauga	9/97	4/97
Tar-Pamlico	1/95	12/94 (approved)	Little Tennessee	10/97	5/97
Catawba	4/95	2/95	Hiwassee	12/97	5/97
French Broad	**8/95**	**4/95**			
New	11/95	6/95	Chowan	1/98	8/97
			Pasquotank	1/98	8/97
Cape Fear	1/96	8/95	Neuse (2nd cycle)	4/98	11/97
			Yadkin-Pee Dee	7/98	1/98
			Broad	11/98	6/98

The number of plans to be developed each year varies from one to six and is based on the total number of permits to be issued each year. For example, the Cape Fear basin, the state's largest, has about as many dischargers as all six of the small basins in 1997. This has been done in order to balance the permit processing workload from year to year. In years where more than one basin is scheduled to be evaluated, an effort has been made to group at least some of the basins geographically in order to minimize travel time and cost for field studies and public meetings.

Plans to be updated every five years - The earliest basin plans will likely not achieve all of the long-term objectives for basinwide management outlined above. However, subsequent updates of the plans, every 5 years, will incorporate additional data and new assessment tools (e.g., basinwide water quality modeling) and management strategies (e.g., for reducing nonpoint source contributions) as they become available.

Basinwide Plan Preparation, Review and Public Involvement - Preparation of an individual basinwide management plan is a five year process which is broken down into four phases described below.

Year	Activity
1 to 3	Water Quality Data Collection/Identification of Goals and Issues: Year 1 entails identifying sampling needs and canvassing for information. It also entails coordinating with other agencies, the academic community and local interest groups to begin establishing goals and objectives and identifying and prioritizing problems and issues. Biomonitoring, fish community and tissue analyses, special studies and other water quality sampling activities are conducted in Years 2 and 3 by DEM's Environmental Sciences Branch (ESB). These studies provide information for assessing water quality status and trends throughout the basin and provide data for computer modeling.
3 to 4	Data Assessment and Model Preparation: Modeling priorities are identified early in this phase and are refined through assessment of water quality data from the ESB. Data from special studies are then used by DEM's Technical Support Branch (TSB) to prepare models for estimating potential impacts of waste loading from point and nonpoint sources using the TMDL approach. Preliminary water quality control

strategies are developed, based on modeling, with input from local governments, the regulated community and citizens groups during this period.

4 Preparation of Draft Basinwide Plan: The draft plan, which is prepared by DEM's Planning Branch, is due for completion by the end of year 4. It is based on support documents prepared by ESB (water quality data) and TSB (modeling data and recommended pollution control strategies). Preliminary findings are presented at informal meetings through the year with local governments and interested groups, and comments are incorporated into the draft.

5 Public Review and Approval of Plan: During the beginning of year 5, the draft plan, after approval of the Environmental Management Commission (EMC), is circulated for review, and public meetings are held. Revisions are made to the document, based on public comments, and the final document is submitted to the EMC for approval midway through year 5. Basinwide permitting begins at the end of year 5.

Each basinwide management plan includes six chapters: (1) An introduction describing the purpose and format of the plan, Water Quality Section responsibilities and enabling legislation; (2) a general basin description including land use, population trends, physiographic regions, and classifications and standards; (3) an overview of existing pollutant sources and loads within a basin and a more generic description of causes and sources of point and nonpoint source pollution for the lay person; (4) an assessment of the status of water quality and biological communities in the basin including use-support rating and 305(b) information (see Section 1.5); (5) a description of the TMDL approach and the state's NPDES and nonpoint source control programs; and (6) priority water quality issues and recommended control strategies, including TMDLs. This process is discussed in more detail in the basinwide program description document.

Implementation - The implementation of basinwide planning and management will occur in phases. Permitting activities and associated routine support activities (field sampling, modeling, wasteload allocation calculations, etc.) have already been rescheduled by major river basin. All National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit renewals within a basin occur within a prescribed time period after completion of the final basin plan, and will be repeated at five year intervals. The NPDES permit renewal schedule drives the schedule for developing and updating the basinwide management plans.

Basinwide NPDES permitting in the French Broad River basin will occur during time intervals between August, 1995 and December, 1996 (Table 1.2). Permits in subbasins 01, 02, and 03 will be issued from August through November of 1995. Permits in subbasins 04, 05, 06, and 07 will be issued from October 1996 through December 1996.

Table 1.2 Subbasin NPDES Permit Schedule for French Broad Basin

Subbasin No.	Month/Year	Subbasin No.	Month/Year
04-03-01	August, 1995	**04-03-05**	November, 1996
04-03-02	September, 1995	**04-03-06**	December, 1996
04-03-03	November, 1995	**04-03-07**	December, 1996
04-03-04	October, 1996		

1.4 BASINWIDE RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE DEM WATER QUALITY SECTION

The Water Quality Section is the lead state agency for the regulation and protection of the state's surface waters. It is one of five sections located within the Division of Environmental Management. The other sections are Groundwater, Air Quality, Construction Loans and Grants and the Laboratory.

The primary responsibilities of the Water Quality Section are to maintain or restore an aquatic environment of sufficient quality to protect the existing and best intended uses of North Carolina's surface waters and to ensure compliance with state and federal water quality standards. The Section receives both state and federal allocations and also receives funding through the collection of permit fees. Policy guidance is provided by the Environmental Management Commission. The Water Quality Section is comprised of over 200 staff members in the central and seven regional offices (Figure 1.2). The major areas of responsibility are water quality monitoring, permitting, planning, modeling (wasteload allocations) and compliance oversight.

The Central office is divided into four branches, with each branch being subdivided into two units. The Planning Branch is responsible for developing water quality standards and classifications, program planning and evaluation, and implementation of new water quality protection programs. The *Water Quality Planning and Assessment Unit* handles surface water reclassifications, development of water quality standards, coordination of the state's nonpoint source program and development of the stormwater runoff program. The *Basinwide Assessment Unit* administers implementation of the water supply watershed and basinwide management programs. It also coordinates EPA water quality planning grants, state environmental policy act responsibilities and development of wetlands rules and regulations.

The Operations Branch is responsible for permit compliance tracking, the pretreatment program and the operator training and certification program. The *Facility Assessment Unit* includes both the permit compliance and pretreatment programs. The *Operator Training and Certification Unit* rates the complexity of operation of wastewater treatment plants and provides formal training for operators commensurate with the plant operating needs.

The Technical Support Branch is responsible for processing of discharge and nondischarge permits as well for preparing TMDLs and wasteload allocations for dischargers. The *Instream Assessment Unit* provides primary computer modeling support and is responsible for coordinating development of TMDLs and individual NPDES wasteload allocations. The *Permits and Engineering Unit* handles reviews and processing of permit applications for both discharging and nondischarging wastewater treatment systems.

The Environmental Sciences Branch is responsible for water quality monitoring, toxicity testing, biological laboratory certifications and the wetlands 401 Water Quality Certification program. The branch is divided into the Ecosystems Analysis Unit and the Aquatic Survey and Toxicology Unit Some of the major functions of the *Ecosystems Analysis Unit* include biological and chemical water quality monitoring and evaluation, evaluating reclassification requests, algal analyses, benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring (biomonitoring), fish tissue and fish communities studies and wetlands assessment and certification. Major functions of the *Aquatic Survey and Toxicology Unit* include effluent toxicity testing, chemical toxicity evaluations, toxicity reduction evaluations (TRE), biological lab certification, biocide evaluations and related special studies, intensive surveys, special studies, dye studies, time-of-travel studies, long term biochemical and sediment oxygen demand, chemical water quality monitoring and lakes assessments.

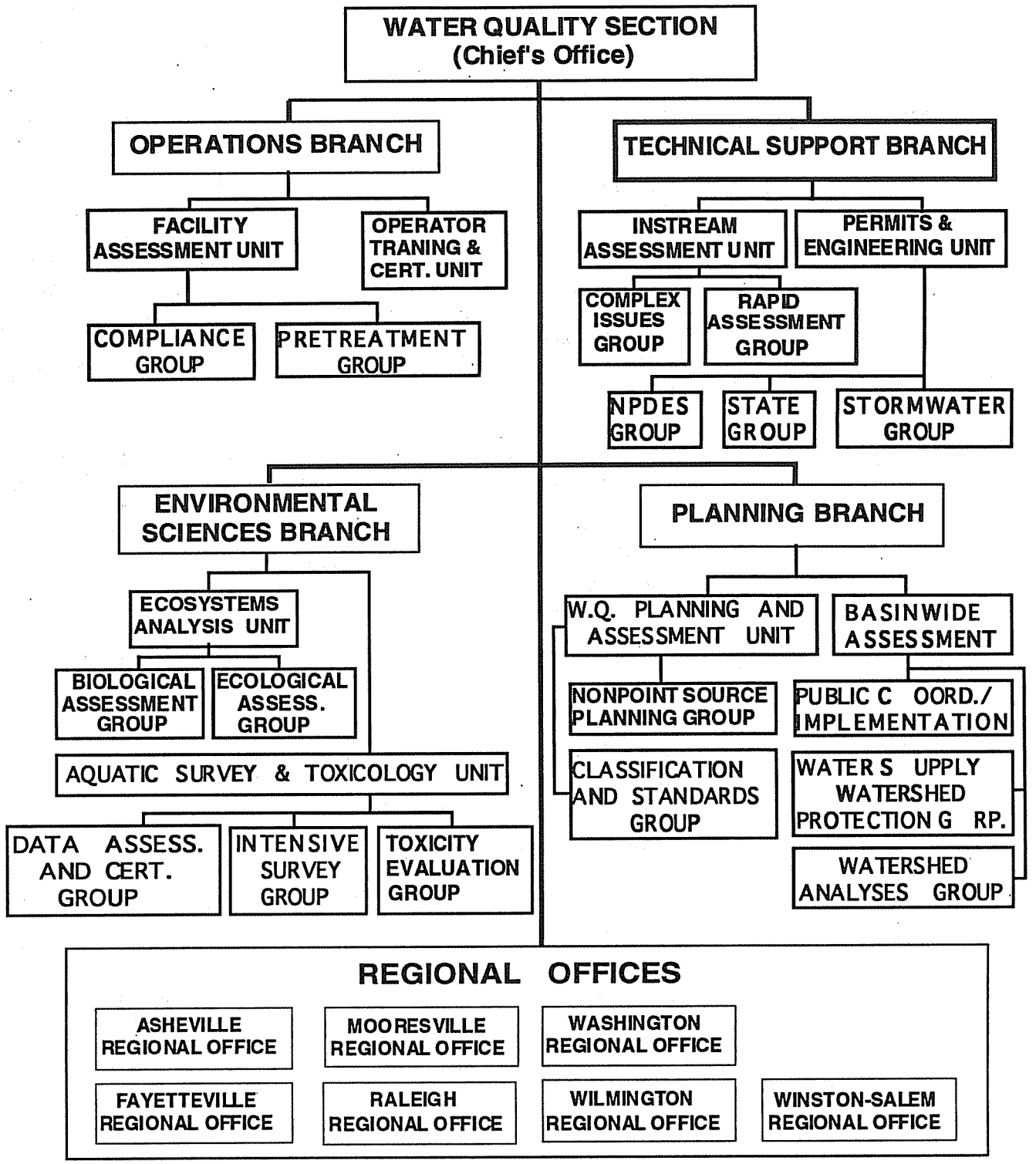

Figure 1.2 Organizational Structure of the DEM Water Quality Section

The seven Regional Offices carry out activities such as wetland reviews, compliance evaluations, permit reviews and facility inspections for both discharging and nondischarging systems, ambient water quality monitoring, state environmental policy act reviews, stream reclassification reviews, pretreatment program support and operator training and certification assistance. In addition, they respond to water quality emergencies such as oil spills and fish kills, investigate complaints and provide information to the public.

Although the basic structure and major responsibilities within the Water Quality Section will remain unchanged, implementation of a basinwide approach to water quality management will require some modification of and additions to the tasks currently conducted by each branch and the regional offices. The goal of basinwide planning is to broaden the scope of management activities from a stream reach to the entire basin. Accomplishing this goal will require more complex water quality modeling, data interpretation, and database management within the water quality program. For example, more sophisticated methods of quantitatively estimating nonpoint source pollutant loads will need to be developed and applied. In addition, these quantitative estimates of nonpoint source loads will have to be integrated with information on point sources to determine the total loading to the system.

Planning for future growth and the possibility of incorporating "agency banking" (see Section 5.3) into the Water Quality Section's management objectives will require model projections of various potential scenarios to allocate the remaining assimilative capacity and fairly distribute control requirements. Finally, the link between water quality data and model projections for the multiple stream reaches within a basin, and the overlay of other relevant types of information, such as land use, will require expanded use of geographic information systems (GIS) with coordination and support from this state's Center for Geographic Information Analysis (CGIA).

1.5 STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITIES FOR NORTH CAROLINA'S WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

Authorities for some of the programs and responsibilities carried out by the Water Quality Section are derived from a number of federal and state legislative mandates outlined below. The major federal authorities (Section 1.5.1) for the state's water quality program are found in sections of the Clean Water Act (CWA). State authorities listed in Section 1.5.2 are from state statutes.

1.5.1 Federal Authorities for NC's Water Quality Program

- **Section 301** - Prohibits the discharge of pollutants into surface waters unless permitted by EPA (see Section 402, below).
- **Section 303(c)** - States are responsible for reviewing, establishing and revising water quality standards for all surface waters.
- **Section 303(d)** - Each state shall identify those waters within its boundaries for which the effluent limits required by section 301(b)(1) A and B are not stringent enough to protect any water quality standards applicable to such waters.
- **Section 305(b)** - Each state is required to submit a biennial report to the EPA describing the status of surface waters in that state.
- **Section 319** - Each state is required to develop and implement a nonpoint source pollution management program.
- **Section 402** - Establishes the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program. Allows for delegation of permitting authority to qualifying states (includes North Carolina).
- **Section 404/401** - Section 404 prohibits the discharge of fill materials into navigable waters and adjoining unless permitted by the US Army Corps of Engineers. Section 401 requires the Corps to receive a state Water Quality Certification prior to issuance of a 404 permit.

1.5.2 State Authorities for NC's Water Quality Program

- **G.S. 143-214.1** - Directs and empowers the NC Environmental Management Commission (EMC) to develop a water quality standards and classifications program.
  G.S. 143-214.2 - Prohibits the discharge of wastes to surface waters of the state without a permit.
- **G.S. 143-214.5** - Provides for establishment of the state Water Supply Watershed Protection Program.
- **G.S. 143-214.7** - Directs the EMC to establish a Stormwater Runoff Program.
- **G.S. 143-215** - Authorizes and directs the EMC to establish effluent standards and limitations.
- **G.S. 143-215.1** - Outlines methods for control of sources of water pollution (NPDES and nondischarge permits, statutory notice requirements, public hearing requirements, appeals, etc.).
- **G.S. 143-215.1** - Empowers the EMC to issue *special orders* to any person whom it finds responsible for causing or contributing to any pollution of the waters of the state within the area for which standards have been established.
- **G.S. 143-215.3(a)** - Outlines additional powers of the EMC including provisions for adopting rules, charging permit fees, delegating authority, investigating fish kills and investigating violations of rules, standards or limitations adopted by the EMC.
- **G.S. 143-215.6A, 143-215.6B and 143-215.6C** - Includes enforcement provisions for violations of various rules, classifications, standards, limitations, provisions or management practices established pursuant to G.S. 143-214.1, 143-214.2, 143-214.5, 143-215, 143-215.1, 143-215.2. 6A describes enforcement procedures for civil penalties. 6B outlines enforcement procedures for criminal penalties. 6C outlines provisions for injunctive relief.
- **G.S. 143-215.75** - Outlines the state's Oil Pollution and Hazardous Substances Control Program.

REFERENCES CITED: CHAPTER 1

Clayton, C.S., and J. P. Baker, 1991, North Carolina's Basinwide Approach to Water Quality Management: Program Description, DEM Water Quality Section, Raleigh, NC.