

3. NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION ACTIVITIES

As indicated by Section 208 of the Clean Water Act, one of the subject matters to be address by an Areawide Water Quality Management Plan is Nonpoint Source Pollution. This section of the Clean Water Act was written and implemented prior to the more formalized nonpoint source planning and management of today. In 1987 the Clean Water Act was amended to include Section 319 to specifically address nonpoint source types of pollution. As such, much of the emphasis of nonpoint source planning and management has shifted from traditional 208 plans into the Nonpoint Source Program at the state level.

The Nonpoint Source Pollution section of the NFRWQPA 208 plan was last revised in the 1999 Update. At that time the Plan identified stormwater discharge from developed areas and runoff from agricultural lands as the two most significant sources of nonpoint source pollution for the region. As indicated in that Plan, there was not specific data available to document the extent of these sources of pollution however, it is safe to assume that these sources remain a concern for the region.

As indicated above, the addition of Section 319 to the Clean Water Act created a more formalized Nonpoint Source Management Program. With that came the development of the Colorado Nonpoint Source Council (Council). The Council served as an advisory group and work group to assist the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Water Quality Control Division (WQCD) with the Colorado Nonpoint Source Program. The Council was made up of government agencies and special interest groups who were involved and interested in nonpoint source issues. The Council has played a role in the continuing effort to identify nonpoint source problems and issues in Colorado, propose programs and projects, and demonstrate and promote best management practices.

Because of the NFRWQPA's task in addressing nonpoint source pollution in our region, we have served as a member of the Council along with several other 208 designated management agencies in the state. This participation allowed for a process to identify nonpoint sources of pollution and to assure that local water quality goals and objectives were being considered in state and federal water quality decision making.

As with many federal programs, the Nonpoint Source program has grown and evolved over time. In 2005 the WQCD in cooperation with the Council created the 2005 supplement to the Nonpoint Source Management Program. This document supersedes the major update to the program that was approved by EPA in 2000 and provides an updated action plan, program priorities and funding guidelines.

The supplement outlines the program actions for the next five years. In particular it outlines how the NPS program will migrate from an individual pollutant category approach, such as agriculture, mining or construction, to a pollutant-integrated watershed approach, addressing the collective NPS needs of a specific geographic region of Colorado.

In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has adopted new strategic targets and associated reporting requirements which will need to be implemented in the program. Because of this the WQCD is proposing to prioritize watershed based on four main categories or area of concern. Those areas include:

1. water quality standards
2. watershed groups' level of readiness
3. how ready the local community is to proceed
4. how well project implementation results can be monitored

Using this prioritized watershed approach by the WQCD will result in a more structured approach in approving 319 projects. This should assist in focusing resources and producing more measurable results in regards to water quality improvements from nonpoint sources. This process also allows for the WQCD to allocate the majority of the NPS funds in the basins on a rotating basis that coordinate with the triennial regulation reviews in the basins.

This process has resulted in change to the type of assistance that is needed from the Council. As such the Council is in a process of reinventing itself. The Council members continue to feel that their participation in the program is a value to the state and that by restructuring to meet the evolving need they will be able to continue to provide a valuable asset to the state.

The restructured group will now be the Colorado Nonpoint Source Alliance. The structure of the Alliance will include an Operational Executive Committee and Working Technical Committees/Task Forces/Work Groups. The Alliance has developed a list of objective and tasks that it will need to accomplish under the new structure. These include providing support to local watershed partners; encouraging collaboration among local, state, and federal agencies; providing a technical pool of individual with a wide range of expertise to act as a resource; assisting in the development of watershed plans; and recommending appropriate monitoring and assessment at a watershed level.

NFRWQPA will continue to participate in the NPS group as it merges into its new identity as the Alliance. This participation will help to ensure that the regions nonpoint source concerns and needs are brought to the state level and that opportunities for improvements are recognized.