



TASK 7: SPECIAL PROJECTS

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TASK 7: SPECIAL PROJECTS

Introduction

Special projects may be developed to address watershed-specific concerns that may influence water quality as identified by the basin Basin Planning Agency and Steering Committee as priority issues for the basin.

Some types of special projects that may be considered under this task include:

- development of watershed protection plans and other nonpoint source related activities
- source water protection and assessment related activities
- cooperative continuous monitoring projects that focus on technology development and experimental design
- defining groundwater geology in reference to its potential impact on surface water quality
- water conservation planning efforts to help increase flow during low-flow periods

If more than one project is planned, each one should be defined as a sub-task (Task 7.1, Task 7.2, etc.) with separate plans, deliverables, and budgets. Basin Planning Agencies should work closely with their CRP Project Manager since most of these projects will require meetings to discuss and scope out project plans.

Note: Certain special projects may not be considered allowable based on their outlined activities and ultimate function. As in the past, implementation projects are not allowable. It has also been determined that projects used to define instream flow needs for water supply functions do not fall within the focus of the CRP.

In developing projects to meet CRP and natural resource goals, Basin Planning Agencies should involve local stakeholders in a collaborative coordination effort to secure and target resources. Existing forums, such as, the CRP Steering Committees, TMDL Watershed Committees, Source Water Assessment and Protection Committees, and Basin Water Planning Committees can be used to initiate and advance the implementation of watershed restoration activities. Relevant issues should be made available to the public for review and comment through the Basin Planning Agency's Web site, e-mail and letter distributions, and news releases.

Nonpoint Source Projects

Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act (CWA) authorizes the distribution of federal funds for implementation of nonpoint source (NPS) prevention and restoration activities. The 319(h) grant program supports three basic types of activities: assessment, implementation of best management practices (BMP), and development of Watershed Protection Plans. CRP funds may be spent on activities related to assessment and the development of Watershed Protection Plans, but not implementation. Eligible **assessment** activities involve the collection and analysis of information about NPS pollution, its effect on water quality in specific bodies of water, and the results of BMPs used to reduce NPS pollution. Special studies involving monitoring should be addressed in Task 3.



Watershed Protection Plans

Watershed Protection Plans are comprehensive plans designed to protect unimpaired waters and restore impaired waters. Watershed Protection Plans to restore impaired waters are required for all implementation projects funded with certain types of CWA Section 319(h) funds. Therefore, the development of Watershed Protection Plans would be a worthwhile activity if there are any plans to apply to CWA Section 319(h) funds in the future. Project grants are subject to a 40 percent local match on the part of the implementing entity. CRP activities related to the project can be used to help fulfill this match requirement. During the development of the plan, stakeholders in the watershed should be involved in the planning process to ensure their interests are represented. In order to qualify for funding, Watershed Protection Plans must include all nine elements specified in EPA guidance.

For more information about the **TCEQ Nonpoint Source Management Program**, available grants, and EPA guidance and requirements, visit the TCEQ's Web site at:

www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/water/quality/nps/index.html#grants.

Source Water Assessment & Protection Partnerships

The Basin Planning Agencies should consider participation in local and regional efforts to prevent the contamination of surface and groundwater sources of public drinking water supplies. A comprehensive opinion survey on water issues conducted in June 2004 over a diverse 70 county area in Texas indicated that 90% of the population puts a high priority on safe, clean water running to their homes for everyday use. Yet, almost one-third of the population did not know the source of their home water supply.

The federally mandated TCEQ Source Water Assessment & Protection (SWAP) program brings pertinent regulatory and scientific information to the 6,700 public water systems across the state and provides a forum for public involvement and education to help protect water supply sources in Texas.

www.tceq.state.tx.us/permitting/water_supply/pdw/SWAP/swp.html

Source Water Assessment

In response to the 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, Texas created a drinking water assessment program by developing GIS data sets of more than 800,000 potential contaminant sources, incorporating more than 20 different land use classifications, evaluating more than four million water quality samples, and creating numerous hydrological and hydrogeological data sets. The result of these assessments is a summary of each respective public drinking water system's susceptibility to 227 drinking water contaminants. These assessment reports were mailed to water systems in mid 2003 and are designed to be a catalyst to implementing local source water protection projects.

Source Water Protection

The assessment reports are intended to be used to target the potential contaminant sources water system officials should be most aware so they can begin developing best management practice options and contingency planning. Source water protection projects are broken down into three major components:

- **Project Meetings:** These meetings are intended to ensure adequate local participation for a successful project. They may include orientation meetings, technical advisory meetings, and outreach/education meetings.



- **Site Investigation and Inventory:** Due to the large number of potential sources of contamination (PSOC), each source water protection project will have a field verification element which will involve determining if the location and existence of each PSOC is accurate and will also include any PSOCs that were missed in the Source Water Assessment report. This step requires database work which will then be submitted to the TCEQ to be incorporated into a revised Assessment Report.
- **Source Water Protection Strategy:** The results of the PSOC inventory will be summarized along with potential BMP strategies to help minimize the potential for contamination and contingency planning in the event of an unexpected contaminant release.
- **Source Water Protection Substantial Implementation:** Implementation of BMPs that are designed to eliminate or reduce contamination. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - abandoned water well plugging;
 - emergency response planning;
 - participation in household hazardous waste collections or agricultural waste collections;
 - watershed protection programs;
 - ordinances or permitting programs.

Basin Planning Agency Participation Options

While the focus of the SWAP program is targeted toward public drinking water systems, there are many entities (river authorities, councils of governments, and municipalities) that share the goals of protecting drinking water sources. The participation and support of these entities are crucial to the success of a source water protection program. Depending on the available resources, the following options should be considered for potential source water protection partners:

- **Option #1:** (Least intensive) Partners support the source water protection activities taking place in their area and are present at the planning meetings. They provide their insight, knowledge, and recommendations for a more successful source water protection strategy.
- **Option #2:** Partners go beyond the general support at planning meetings by providing one time assistance in the field and some general guidance during the potential source of contamination inventory. Depending on the size of the protection area, this work should not require more than several days to one week.
- **Option #3:** At this level of participation, partners become the coordinating entity and follow the steps for the creation of a source water protection strategy while the TCEQ is in a supporting role. Partners organize the planning meetings, conduct the potential source of contamination inventory, update and submit the data to TCEQ, and complete a source water protection strategy for the water system. This source water protection strategy includes a description of the source water assessment results, maps and descriptions of the identified potential contaminant sources, a contingency plan, and a wish list of best management practices to address concerns identified during the inventory. The funding of this level of participation may be through TCEQ or other external funding sources.

There are also opportunities for volunteer organizations to be involved during the inventory of PSOCs,



and this can be a valuable resource for leveraging professional staff. While some of the GPS and database work may be beyond the scope of volunteers, volunteers may be applied to determine if the existing PSOC location information is correct and to identify any PSOCs that were omitted in the original Source Water Assessment report. Professional staff can then focus their GPS and database energies on the areas identified by the volunteers.

Currently the TCEQ has a contractor in place to complete Source Water Protection projects, but, due to the large number of public water systems, this effort alone will be insufficient to address all the drinking water systems in the state. During this process, TCEQ staff will be working to clearly define the roles of willing partners to better address source water protection priorities, and in many cases, to leverage the work that is already underway at the local level.

Continuous Monitoring Projects

Continuous stream monitoring can potentially be used for a variety of purposes, including:

- identifying seasonal trends and daily variation
- evaluating the influence of point and non-point sources of pollution, including short-term events
- assessing effectiveness of watershed management and implementation plans
- providing current data to the public
- technology development and experimental design

Since the up-front costs in establishing a continuous monitoring project can be considerably more than the traditional monitoring strategies, seeking opportunities to partner with other agencies, including the TCEQ, provides a potentially more economically feasible plan for those wanting to establish these programs. Often in these continuous monitoring partnerships, various aspects and responsibilities of the project are divided among multiple entities: equipment purchase, site establishment, sonde calibration and deployment, site and equipment maintenance, and data validation. The level of involvement and project objective will determine how and if these continuous monitoring efforts should be included in the workplan and possibly in the basin QAPP.

Instream Flow Studies

The Basin Planning Agencies may consider projects to collect or evaluate information in support of determining instream flow needs for their basin(s). The TCEQ's Water Rights Permitting and Availability Section has prioritized some basins for instream flow studies and some of those studies are currently in process. If a Basin Planning Agency determines that this is a priority for Clean Rivers Program resources, the project would need to be planned with the appropriate TCEQ staff to ensure objectives are met for both the TCEQ and the Basin Planning Agency.

Some of the possible types of work needed for these studies include:

- evaluating the water quality data with respect to flows and biology
- collecting additional water quality and biological data
- evaluating, validating, and/or identifying flow regimes.