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 (DWQ) 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 water quality plan is a five-year process, which is broken down into three 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 cycle of plans was completed in 1998, but each plan is updated at five-year intervals.

1.2 Goals of Basinwide Water Quality Planning

The goals of basinwide planning 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 to protect and restore water quality;
- 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 Cycle of Basinwide Planning (1998 to 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basin</th>
<th>DWQ Biological Data Collection</th>
<th>River Basin Public Workshops</th>
<th>Public Mtgs. and Draft Out For Review</th>
<th>Final Plan Receives EMC Approval</th>
<th>Begin NPDES Permit Issuance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

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

| Years 1 - 2 Water Quality Data Collection and Identification of Goals and Issues | • Identify sampling needs
|                                                                             | • Conduct biological monitoring activities
|                                                                             | • Conduct special studies and other water quality sampling activities
|                                                                             | • Coordinate with local stakeholders and other agencies to continue to implement goals within current basinwide plan
| Years 2 - 3 Data Analysis and Public Workshops                              | • Gather and analyze data from sampling activities
|                                                                             | • Develop use support ratings
|                                                                             | • Conduct special studies and other water quality sampling activities
|                                                                             | • Conduct public workshops to establish goals and objectives and identify and prioritize issues for the next basin cycle
|                                                                             | • Develop preliminary pollution control strategies
|                                                                             | • Coordinate with local stakeholders and other agencies
| Years 3 - 5 Preparation of Draft Basinwide Plan, Public Review, Approval of Plan, Issue NPDES Permits and Begin Implementation of Plan | • Develop draft basinwide plan based on water quality data, use support ratings, and recommended pollution control strategies
|                                                                             | • Circulate draft basinwide plan for review and present draft plan at public meetings
|                                                                             | • Revise plan after public review period
|                                                                             | • Submit plan to Environmental Management Commission for approval
|                                                                             | • Issue NPDES permits
|                                                                             | • Coordinate with other agencies and local interest groups to prioritize implementation actions
|                                                                             | • Conduct special studies and other water quality sampling activities
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 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 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 equity.* By clearly defining the program’s long-term goals and objectives, basinwide plans encourage consistent decision-making on permits and water quality improvement strategies.
- *Increased public participation in the state’s water quality protection programs.* The basinwide plans are an educational tool for increasing public involvement and awareness about 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.
1.5  How to Get Involved

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

- **Public workshops:** Held before 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 Water Quality Committee of the Environmental Management Commission has approved the draft basinwide plan. 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 Water Quality Committee of the Environmental Management Commission has approved the draft plan. 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 basin planner for your river basin.

1.6  Other References

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

- **Watauga River Basinwide Assessment Report.** April 1999. This technical report presents the physical, chemical and biological data in the Watauga River basin. 44 pp.
- **Watauga River Basinwide Water Quality Management Plan.** April 1997. This first basinwide plan for the Watauga River basin presents water quality data, information and recommended management strategies for the first five-year cycle. 250 pp.
- **A Citizen’s Guide to Water Quality Management in North Carolina.** August 2000. This document includes general information about water quality issues and programs to address these issues. It is intended to be an informational document on water quality. 156 pp.
- **NC Division of Water Quality Basinwide Planning Website at [http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/](http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/).** Click on Water Quality Section and then, under Programs, click on Basinwide Planning Program.
- **NC Division of Water Quality Environmental Sciences Branch Website [http://esb.ehnr.state.nc.us/BAU.html](http://esb.ehnr.state.nc.us/BAU.html).**

Anyone interested in receiving these documents can contact the DWQ Planning Branch at (919) 733-5083 or by internet: [http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/basinwide/](http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/basinwide/).
1.7 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. Additional information can be found on the Division of Water Quality website at [http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/](http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/).

![Water Quality Section Organization Structure](image-url)

**Figure A-2** Water Quality Section Organization Structure