

Principles for a Viable Watershed Approach

We, the undersigned organizations, believe that after nearly 40 years of regulation under the Clean Water Act, serious barriers remain to fully protecting and restoring the nation's waters. What is needed now is a broader holistic approach that will prioritize and address the most significant current impacts on water quality in the most effective and responsible way. The following principles should guide the ongoing and future development of legislation and policies to address these problems.

1. The physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters must be protected and restored, and addressing water quantity, water quality, and habitat impacts must be integrated through scientifically sound watershed planning and management.
2. Water quality protection efforts should generally be watershed-based, and a framework must be established to deal with watersheds that cross traditional jurisdictional boundaries.
3. All sources and activities contributing to pollution and degradation of the health of our watersheds must be identified and addressed collectively and effectively.
4. Existing tools in the Clean Water Act, such as watershed planning, should be revised so they can be more effectively used to facilitate fully integrated site-specific watershed planning.
5. More comprehensive measures must be pursued to address agricultural and other nonpoint sources, including air deposition and unregulated wet weather runoff.
6. Local stakeholder involvement and public education is required to address watershed-specific concerns.
7. Priorities for existing programs and new regulations should address the most significant sources of impairment and watershed degradation.
8. Innovative solutions, such as green infrastructure, and market-based solutions, such as water quality trading, should be encouraged and given sufficient time to become effective. These strategies, however, must not sacrifice enforceability or confidence in pollution reductions.
9. An improved monitoring and evaluation program is necessary to evaluate the chemical, physical, and biological attributes of watersheds.
10. All contributors to watershed pollution and degradation should be responsible for the costs of watershed improvements.
11. Significant federal investment is required to implement these watershed principles in a viable manner; such financial assistance should be allocated equitably among all contributors, both point and nonpoint, and should require sufficient accountability by all recipients.
12. Requirements to improve and sustain watershed health must be imposed and enforceable upon any contributors to pollution and watershed degradation.

