

# What is a Watershed-Based Plan?



## Purpose & Need

The purpose of a Massachusetts Watershed-Based Plan (WBP) is to organize information about Massachusetts's watersheds, and present it in a format that will enhance the development and implementation of projects that will restore water quality and beneficial uses in the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts WBP follows USEPA's recommended format for "nine-element" watershed plans, as described below.

All states are required to develop WBPs, but not all states have taken the same approach. Most states develop watershed-based plans only for selected watersheds. MassDEP's approach has been to develop a tool to support statewide development of WBPs, so that good projects in all areas of the state may be eligible for federal watershed implementation grant funds under [Section 319 of the Clean Water Act](#).

## Background

USEPA guidelines promote the use of Section 319 funding for developing and implementing WBPs. WBPs are required for all projects implemented with Section 319 funds, and are recommended for all watershed projects, whether they are designed to protect unimpaired waters, restore impaired waters, or both.

The USEPA Guidelines list the following nine elements required to be included in WBPs:

- a. An **identification of the causes and sources** or groups of similar sources that will need to be controlled to achieve the load reductions estimated in this watershed-based plan (and to achieve any other watershed goals identified in the watershed-based plan), as discussed in item (b) immediately below.
- b. An **estimate of the load reductions** expected for the management measures described under paragraph (c) below (recognizing the natural variability and the difficulty in precisely predicting the performance of management measures over time).
- c. A **description of the NPS management measures** needed to achieve the load reductions estimated under paragraph (b) above (as well as to achieve other watershed goals identified in this watershed-based plan), and an identification (using a map or a description) of the critical areas in which those measures will be needed to implement this plan.
- d. An **estimate of the amounts of technical and financial assistance needed**, associated costs, and/or the sources and authorities that will be relied



upon, to implement this plan. As sources of funding, States should consider the use of their Section 319 programs, State Revolving Funds, USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Reserve Program, and other relevant Federal, State, local and private funds that may be available to assist in implementing this plan.

- e. An **information/education component** that will be used to enhance public understanding of the project and encourage their early and continued participation in selecting, designing, and implementing the NPS management measures that will be implemented.



- f. A **schedule for implementing the NPS management measures** identified in this plan that is reasonably expeditious.



- g. A description of **interim, measurable milestones** for determining whether NPS management measures or other control actions are being implemented.

- h. A set of **criteria to determine if loading reductions are being achieved** over time and substantial progress is being made towards attaining water quality standards and, if not, the criteria for determining whether this watershed-based plan needs to be revised or, if a NPS Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) has been established, whether the TMDL needs to be revised.



- i. A **monitoring component** to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation efforts over time, measured against the criteria established under item (h) immediately above.

