



THE CLEAN WATER ACTION PLAN

The Clean Water Action Plan, announced by President Clinton and Vice President Gore on February 19, 1998, charts a new course for protecting and restoring our nation's waterways, emphasizing collaborative strategies built around watersheds and the communities they sustain.

For the past year, nine federal agencies have been working together to carry out the key actions in the Action Plan and assist state and local groups with their watershed work.

DOE's Role in Clean Water

The Department of Energy is the fourth largest federal land owner, with major sites on 2.4 million acres across the United States. DOE sites are situated near large metropolitan areas, and in isolated communities. Although portions of DOE sites were affected by weapons production and energy research activities, the majority of DOE's 2.4 million acres were used as buffer lands and have been relatively untouched for over 50 years.

The Clean Water Act established a comprehensive federal and state program for controlling the introduction of pollutants into the Nation's water. In 1972, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program was established to protect surface waters by limiting effluent discharges into streams, reservoirs, wetlands and other waters. DOE facilities that discharge wastewaters to either a surface water body or a publicly owned treatment works obtain NPDES permits.

DOE sites obtain necessary wetlands permits, conduct surface water monitoring and surveillance programs to assess the impacts of past and current operations on the quality of surface waters, prepare site environmental reports annually, sponsor research on water quality and water pollution control issues, and co-fund research on oil and gas industry waste and wastewater technology topics.

On September 8, 1998, Secretary of Energy Richardson endorsed the goals of the Action Plan, and directed senior managers to identify actions DOE could take to support the initiative. In November 1998, DOE joined other Federal partners in signing the Federal Multi-Agency Source Water Agreement. DOE will continue to support the Action Plan by participating on interagency implementation teams, and by continuing efforts to integrate responsible environmental management and stewardship into DOE programs.

Selected DOE Highlights Related to Clean Water Goals:

Colorado:

DOE's Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site entered into a formal agreement with the local cities of Broomfield, Northglenn, and Westminster to take a collaborative, watershed-based approach to biological and water quality monitoring and implementation of watershed protection activities in the Big Dry Creek Basin. The goals of the Big Dry Creek Watershed Partnership include public education, monitoring activities, and the protection of water quality, aquatic life, and habitat. A Big Dry Creek Watershed Association, with broader membership of federal, state and

local agencies, was also formed, and hopes to expand membership to community groups, schools, farmers, developers and businesses.

New Mexico:

DOE's Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) distributed a draft Watershed Management Plan on February 17, 1999, to the New Mexico Environment Department and the Environmental Protection Agency for review. This plan lays out an approach to protect and manage the 43 square mile watershed within LANL's boundaries, and to complement protection efforts of neighboring landowners. A final draft of the Plan is expected in Spring 1999.

LANL's NPDES Outfall Reduction Program successfully has reduced the number of NPDES permitted outfalls from 141 to 36 in the past 5 years, and plans future reductions.

New York:

In recent years, efforts to improve effluent water quality at DOE's West Valley Demonstration Project have produced a substantial reduction in the annual number of exceptions to the numerical discharge limits specified in the site's State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit. 1998 marked the first year since DOE took over operation in 1982 that no permit exceptions were recorded, in contrast to a peak of 35 exceptions in 1986.

Ohio:

Enhanced water quality, aquatic habitat rehabilitation and wetlands construction are key components of a unique "preferred alternative" clean up plan, put forth for DOE's former uranium production facility in southwestern Ohio. Building on a plan for soil remediation at the Fernald Site, the facility will expand existing riparian corridors, create dozens of acres of new open water habitat, and connect open water bodies with wetland systems. These enhancements are in addition to hundreds of acres of reforestation planned for the site. The plan also includes a ground water education component.

South Carolina:

DOE's Savannah River Site is rich in surface water resources, and represents approximately 90% of the streams, lakes and wetlands across DOE's lands. The Site land is managed for multiple resources and ecosystem benefits. DOE is developing a watershed management plan with multiple partnerships to plot a course for monitoring the general health of the streams and associated watersheds. The plan will encompass all of the Site resources to provide a comprehensive management strategy for conserving, restoring and enhancing water quality in Site streams to ensure attainment of designated uses.

Partnerships among federal and state agencies, universities, and other stakeholders have been applied to a variety of water initiatives. Examples of these initiatives include: DOE's first National Environmental Research Park and one of the largest biodiversity research sites in the United States; a Wetland Mitigation Bank; restoration of Lost Lake Carolina Bay (a wetland type unique to the SE United States); the Savannah River Basin Watershed Project; the Savannah River Basin Comprehensive Study; and a watershed approach to evaluate and clean up streams on the Savannah River Site.

*To view the Action Plan and get updates please visit the web site at:
<http://cleanwater.gov>*

*For public information on DOE please call (202) 586-5575, or visit DOE's web site at:
<http://www.doe.gov>. For information on DOE's clean water initiatives call (202) 586-8505, or
visit the new DOE clean water web site focus area at: <http://tis.eh.doe.gov/oepa/cwap>*