

SECTION II

Basin Management Process

Role of customer participation

Involvement by local governments and other partners is a critical part of basin management.

Partnership Teams

The MPCA will work with partnership teams in each of the basins to gather local input for the basin management process. These teams represent a core group of local partners and state agencies that are responsible for developing water quality priorities and strategies that can be implemented or initiated by members of the team. Representatives for these partnership teams will be determined somewhat uniquely for each basin, as some of the basins have existing partnership structures already established, and the social dynamics of each basin need to be considered when forming external teams. The composition of these teams would vary from basin to basin, but it would include bringing to the table those parties/partners that have resources to bring to bear on the watersheds.

Examples of typical partnership team members include:

- Local governmental agencies;
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- State water resource management agencies;
- Private industry (food processing, etc.);
- Local water planners;
- Public and private drinking water and wastewater utilities;
- Federal natural resource agencies
- Universities and research foundations;
- Watershed Districts;

- Local and regional offices of federal agencies;
- Environmental groups; and
- Citizen volunteer monitoring groups.

The MPCA will work with external partners to arrive at compatible management goals, such as specific stream segments to be restored or protected, loading reductions to be achieved, or the amount of habitat to be restored. This MPCA/external partnership team will also establish feasible combinations of point and nonpoint source control measures and management actions to achieve goals. Management options will be evaluated for their relative effectiveness in achieving environmental objectives through the use of predictive modeling or other methods. Regulatory constraints and procedures will be considered, and consensus will be sought where voluntary efforts are needed to meet specific environmental objectives. Strategies will include descriptions of the actions to be taken, responsibilities for implementation, timelines, costs, funding sources, monitoring strategies, and when applicable, information on compliance tracking and enforcement methods.

Partnership teams will establish roles and goals uniquely adapted to the particular basin and team composition. Envisioned roles of the watershed partnership teams include:

- developing watershed/waterbody specific environmental objectives;
- exploring cooperative joint ventures leading to more cost effective solutions;

- developing effective mechanisms for linking local priorities to state programs;
- data sharing;
- finding opportunities for joint monitoring;
- shared commitment of resources for plan implementation;
- outreach.

Broad public involvement

While partnership teams emphasizes local involvement, these teams do not replace the strong role individual citizens can play in both development and implementation of basin management plans. Basin management will create opportunities for a broad range of partners to increase their awareness of water-related issues and play meaningful roles in water resources management. MPCA plans to use a variety of outreach methods within each basin to keep the public informed and engaged.

Timeline of Basin Planning Process for the Upper Mississippi River Basin

The MPCA has been gradually shifting its water quality programs to basin planning since the early 1990s, and began implementing basin planning in earnest in late 1995. The timeline of the Upper Mississippi River Basin was determined in the MPCA Basin Planning Framework. While the original draft framework had the planning process starting earlier in the Upper Mississippi River Basin the goal for the completion of the plan is still December of 2001. With the release of this basin information document in mid-2000, the basin planning process for the Upper Mississippi River Basin is underway and is scheduled to continue on as follows. The schedule is flexible and may be altered as necessary, but provides some targets

for completion of steps of the basin planning process to keep the effort moving.

JULY 2000 – JANUARY 2001 - Start of the Planning Process. Analysis of the current water quality situation in the Upper Mississippi River Basin based on water quality monitoring, studies, and assessments of past projects implemented in the basin. Determine priority issues and deficiencies in data and information.

JANUARY 2001 – JULY 2001 - Prioritization of issues and problems, and targeting of specific watersheds, waterbodies, or other locations where action should be taken to begin addressing priority issues.

AUGUST 2001 - SEPTEMBER 2001 - Develop strategies for implementing water quality improvement efforts in area targeted for action, and a monitoring plan for the Upper Mississippi River Basin that addresses data gaps.

OCTOBER 2001 – NOVEMBER 2001 - Draft and finalize Upper Mississippi River Basin Plan, to include basin information document, priorities, targets, strategies, monitoring plan, and implementation plan. Implementation plan will identify specific activities, parties responsible for carrying them out, timelines for carrying them out, and funding mechanisms.

DECEMBER 2001 - Implementation of basin plan begins and continues as long as necessary and appropriate for specific strategies.

JANUARY 2005 - Upper Mississippi River Basin five-year planning cycle starts over.

The first basin plan will serve as a foundation for the next plan and subsequent plans. Subsequent plans will revolve more around assessing the progress made in previous planning cycles and modifying previous plans as deemed necessary.

Partnerships in Upper Mississippi River Basin Planning

The MPCA sees local involvement in all aspects of basin planning as essential to the success of basin planning and the realization of water quality improvements in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The plan developed through this effort is not meant to be “the MPCA’s plan,” but rather it should be “the Upper Mississippi River Basin Plan,” developed, used, and owned by the resource managers and citizens of the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The MPCA is facilitating this basin planning process in the major drainage basins in the state to carry out its legislative charge to protect water quality, but it can not alone provide the local perspective, the answers, and the person-power needed to provide water quality protection and enhancement.

The Upper Mississippi River Basin already has several local basin or watershed planning initiatives underway with multiple organizations involved in watershed management. The MPCA’s basin planning efforts are not intended to supplant or compete with these efforts in any way. In fact, the MPCA is involved in some capacity in all of these initiatives, and is looking to these initiatives to help us better manage water resources. It will be crucial that the MPCA’s efforts dovetail with other planning efforts to form a cohesive, coordinated strategy.

The MPCA has identified these planning and management organizations as critical resource managers requiring strong basin planning partnerships. At the same time, the MPCA will not exclude any other parties not identified to date from the basin planning process, and welcomes participation from all interested parties.