

Resources for Watershed-Based Planning

Here's an overview of watershed-based planning in New Mexico. The links are current as of October, 2022. Please feel free to ask for additional information from Abe Franklin (abraham.franklin@env.nm.gov, 505-946-8952), or from any Watershed Protection Section staff.

Get Connected

To find out whether a watershed-based plan or other related plan has already been prepared within a particular watershed, you should first review completed and draft plans from these pages:

- EPA-accepted, completed WBPs: <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/accepted-wbp>
- WBPs in development (these are draft plans not yet accepted by EPA): access the "Draft WBP" tab at <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2022/09/NMED-SWQB-WPS-WRAS.xlsx>.
- Watershed Restoration Action Strategies (these are watershed plans dating from prior to 2010, that do not address the nine WBP elements but often provide excellent background information): access the "WRAS" tab at <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2022/09/NMED-SWQB-WPS-WRAS.xlsx>.
- Wetlands Action Plans (developed under the New Mexico Wetlands Program, these plans outline strategies for improving wetlands and riparian areas, but do not address the nine WBP elements): <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/wap/> or turn on the "Wetlands Action Plans" layer at <https://gis.web.env.nm.gov/oem/?map=swqb> to see which areas are covered by WAPs.

Watershed-based planning projects in progress that are supported with Section 319 funds are listed in our [List of Section 319 and River Stewardship Program Projects](#).

To find others with interest in your watershed or stream, and learn from them what progress has been made in the areas of watershed-based planning or implementation, review our list of [Watershed Planning Groups](#). Watershed Protection Section staff are also available to help you find out what is happening in your watershed, simply by contacting us at the phone number or email address above.

Get Started

Groups or individuals interested in watershed-based planning to improve water quality should know whether the stream of interest has had a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) prepared. A list of TMDLs is available at www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/tmdl. The TMDL documents include basic estimates of how much pollutant load reduction needs to occur for a stream or lake to meet its water quality standard. Interested people should also become familiar with the "Minimum Elements of a Watershed-based Plan" listed in the [Nonpoint Source Program and Grants Guidelines for States and Territories](#). The Watershed Protection Section solicits applications for grant funds, in Solicitations for Applications (SFAs), to support watershed-based planning projects. Future SFAs will be released approximately annually, and will be posted at <https://www.env.nm.gov/subgrants>. A second SFA, also released approximately annually, solicits proposals for on-the-ground projects to *implement* watershed-

based plans, but includes a “planning feedback” component that allows groups to optionally revise or supplement watershed-based plans. That SFA will also be posted at <https://www.env.nm.gov/subgrants>.

Develop a Watershed-Based Plan

One of the best references for how to develop a WBP is EPA’s [Resources for Watershed Planning](#) web page, which includes the comprehensive *Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters* and associated technical tools. The *Handbook* covers a wide range of technical and social aspects of watershed-based planning. Generally, water quality monitoring, modeling, or both will be required to identify the important pollutant sources and to estimate the pollutant load reductions that may be achieved with different management measures. The *Handbook* includes useful summaries of several models, and the “Technical Resources” link provides access to some of these models and data needed to run them.

In 2022, more stream miles in New Mexico were impaired by temperature than any other parameter. Two models not mentioned in the *Handbook*, but which are useful for modeling heat loading in streams, are the [Stream Network and Stream Segment Temperature Models](#) (SNTMP and SSTEMP) developed by the US Geological Survey. We have developed a one-hour workshop which we can provide on request, to help people get oriented to SSTEMP.

Monitoring or modeling supported with Clean Water Act Section 319 funds can only be conducted under an approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). Development of a QAPP is an eligible activity for a watershed-based planning project funded with Section 319 funds, but the QAPP needs to be completed before the monitoring or modeling. Several QAPPs for pollutant source identification are available for download at www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/qapps, for anyone wanting to know more about this requirement.

One of the nine elements of a WBP is a monitoring component to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation efforts over time. The monitoring component is described in the WBP, rather than implemented during the planning project. While effectiveness monitoring is a large topic better elaborated in the *Handbook*, the Watershed Protection Section recommends consideration of upstream and downstream, before and after study designs in situations where large data sets can be collected (e.g., temperature data). Several Nonpoint Source Success Stories for New Mexico described at www.epa.gov/nps/success-stories-about-restoring-water-bodies-impaired-nonpoint-source-pollution have utilized that approach.

Submit a Watershed-Based Plan

If you are ready to submit a watershed-based plan for review, start by contacting any Watershed Protection Section staff. We will ask a few questions and conduct a preliminary evaluation to let you know whether your plan may meet all nine planning elements, and give you some feedback. If the WBP appears to possibly address all nine elements, then we will review it and provide more detailed feedback using the [EPA Region 6 Watershed-Based Plan Review Guide](#). If we concur that the plan addresses all nine elements of a WBP, or is very close, and with your permission, we will submit it to EPA Region 6 for

their review. The US EPA Nonpoint Source Program Manager assigned to New Mexico (Rachel Renz, Renz.Rachel@epa.gov, 214-665-3129) is also available to discuss the details of watershed-based planning at any stage in the process.