

## Resources for Watershed-Based Planning

Here's an overview of watershed-based planning in New Mexico. The links are current as of February 2020. Please feel free to ask for additional information from Kate Lacey-Younge ([Kathryn.lacey@env.nm.gov](mailto:Kathryn.lacey@env.nm.gov), 505-946-8863), 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 the pages on [USEPA-Accepted Watershed-Based Plans](#), [Draft Watershed-Based Plans](#) in development, [Watershed Restoration Action Strategies](#), and [Wetland Action Plans](#). 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](#). A list of [Watershed Planning Groups](#) maintained by the Watershed Protection Section is another useful tool for finding others with interest in your watershed or stream and learning from them what progress has been made in the areas of watershed-based planning or implementation. 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 <https://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 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 Requests for Grant Applications (RFGAs), to support watershed-based planning projects. Future RFGAs will be released approximately annually, and will be posted at [www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/funding-sources](http://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/funding-sources). A second RFGA, 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 RFGA will also be posted at [www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/funding-sources](http://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/funding-sources).

### Develop a Watershed-Based Plan

One of the best references for how to develop a WBP is EPA's comprehensive [Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters](#) and associated tools such as a [Quick Guide and a Watershed Plan Builder](#). 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, some of which are in the public domain and don't require highly specialized skills to run.

In 2016, 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](#) (SNTEMP and SSTEMP) developed by the US Geological Survey.

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. The [Template QAPP](#) useful example 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).

### **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.