

DRAFT State Endorsement Process for Comprehensive Watershed Plans
May 17, 2004

Objectives of the Endorsement Process:

- Consistent criteria are used by state agencies to review and comment on the content of local comprehensive watershed plans;
- Provide official recognition when a comprehensive watershed plan has met those criteria;
- Target available state resources to critical implementation actions in watersheds with endorsed plans (i.e. tie 319 implementation funding to endorsed plans, and work to bring other state resources to support endorsed watershed plan implementation);
- Identify portions of a plan that need correction, so that needed assistance can be provided.

Key Steps in the Endorsement Process:

1. Local watershed groups will use the “Guide to Producing Local Watershed Action Plans in Ohio” and the Appendix 8 Update as the basis for producing a comprehensive watershed plan, both available at <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/nps/index.html#WAP>.
Note: Sections of the comprehensive watershed plan that are not water quality related are not eligible for funding under the 319 program. The watershed group needs to find alternative funding methods to support this work.
2. A functional review meeting will be conducted once a year by the state with the local partners producing the comprehensive watershed plan to:
 - a. Clarify purpose/goal of Coordinator grant to grant sponsor, with an emphasis on administration and fiscal responsibility;
 - b. Reconcile project undertakings with watershed plan production and other grant deliverables;
 - c. Identify barriers/challenges to attaining intermediate (process and structure) and long-term (water quality) goals;
 - d. Develop a shared responsibility for success of the grant program between members of the Area Assistance Teams, Ohio EPA/DNR funders, and the watershed project participants;
 - e. Allow the State to express appreciation to the local projects for their water quality work to date, and identify ways that the state can provide additional assistance.

The Appendix 8 Update will be the key evaluation tool used during the functional review process and a report with any recommended action items will be provided by the state subsequent to the functional review meeting.

3. The watershed group at the local level produces a draft comprehensive watershed plan. The advisory group/steering committee includes appropriate regulatory agencies, such as regional planning organizations, landowners, county offices, and conservancy districts, in helping to review the draft, and the stakeholders involved in plan creation should in writing to follow through on implementation items in which they are listed as lead, and to pursue financial resources for said implementation. OEPA, ODNR, and Ohio State University Extension (OSUE) Area Assistance Team (AAT) members should strategize how they will help the watershed group to produce an acceptable draft.
4. Once the AAT members from ODNR, OEPA, and OSUE believe that the draft satisfies USEPA guidance, the OEPA area contact should forward a copy to the Central Office reviewers. Central Office (CO) personnel will comment directly back to the watershed project regarding requests updates to meet state endorsement within 45 days of plan submission. (See attached matrix detailing CO contact for each project. The first person listed should receive the comments. In the case of all watershed coordinator grants, the CO contact is Rosida Porter).
5. When the draft plan is submitted to Central Office, the Central Office contact should forward a copy of the plan to appropriate Divisions within their agency. ODNR will also inform any public interest group who has expressed an interest in reviewing the plans of their availability so that they can contact the watershed group directly and ask for a copy of the plan for review. Each Division or outside interest group has 45 days to respond with constructive comments that will be considered but may or may not be incorporated into the combined recommendation letter back to the project.
6. The CO Contact will reconcile one set of recommendations representing all the comments of the three agencies. The CO Contact sends a letter (mentioned also in Step 4 above) containing the combined recommendations to the watershed project.
7. Watershed representatives address recommendations in the plan. The timeline on this process should not exceed two months.
8. Once the draft plan meets OEPA/ODNR endorsement criteria, a resolution of support is collected by the watershed project from as many local stakeholder groups as possible.
9. Once these resolutions are in place, a letter recognizing plan endorsement will be issued by Lisa Morris, Chief of the Division of Surface Water at Ohio EPA and

David Hanselmann, Chief of the Division of Soil and Water Conservation at ODNR.

10. The watershed plan will be reviewed and updated periodically in an adaptive management approach.
11. Plan will be forwarded to USEPA, Region 5, Chicago for review. Any USEPA comments or recommendations regarding a plan will be shared with the local watershed group. OEPA and ODNR will be available to assist watershed groups as appropriate.