

Areawide Water Quality Management Plan Chapter 3

WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Executive Summary

Management Framework

The goal of the Clean Water Act of 1972 is often stated as “fishable and swimmable” waters. While that sounds like a clear-cut goal, the actions required to achieve it are far-reaching .

Achieving fishable and swimmable waters means controlling pollutant discharges to streams — industrial wastewaters of all kinds, non-contact cooling waters, sedimentation, nutrients attached to soil and dissolved in runoff water, and sewage. Achieving fishable and swimmable waters also means protecting or restoring habitat — wetlands, riparian corridors, and other habitat areas.

The necessary actors to reach these goals include every private sector entity that discharges wastewater, plus the development and agricultural communities. This *Areawide Water Quality Management Plan* is specifically concerned with the roles of local governmental agencies in meeting Clean Water Act goals. Local governments may be regulated by the state or federal government (e.g., for sewage treatment plants), or may fulfill a regulatory role themselves.

Designated Management Agencies

The Areawide Water Quality Management Plan covers four wastewater or nonpoint source water quality issues in which local governments have a role. Each issue has its own chapter:

- Chapter 4. Public Wastewater Treatment
- Chapter 5. On-Site Sewage Treatment
- Chapter 6. Agricultural Runoff
- Chapter 7. Urban Runoff

Chapter 3 lists the responsibilities of each local government (or agency) in these four areas. A local government with a responsibility in one of these areas is called a “Designated Management Agency,” or DMA. The chapter lists each jurisdiction and whether it is a DMA in each of these areas.

Public Wastewater Treatment

Any local government that owns or operates a sewage treatment plant or sanitary sewer system is

considered a DMA. Cities and villages typically own and operate sanitary sewage systems. In Lucas, Ottawa, and Sandusky Counties, the County Commissioners provide this service to unincorporated areas through the Sanitary Engineer. In Wood County, this role is carried out by Northwestern Water and Sewer District, a “6119” District; and in Monroe County, the Drain Commissioner.

On-Site Sewage Treatment

Regulatory responsibility for septic systems and package sewage treatment is divided between state and local agencies. Most household septic systems are regulated by the Local Health District. In all five TMACOG counties, this role is fulfilled countywide by the County Health Department.

Agricultural Runoff

The role of local government in agriculture is more one of education and technical assistance than regulation. These services are provided by county agencies. In Ohio, they are the County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and in Michigan they are the County Soil Conservation Districts.

Urban Runoff

Urban runoff, or stormwater management, is subject to federal state permit for non-agricultural construction sites and urbanized areas. In urbanized areas, local governments — counties, cities, villages, and townships — have primary legal responsibility to fulfill their own stormwater management plans, and regulate the development community. Many specific functions are carried out by local, county, or regional agencies. That detail is provided in Chapter 7; Chapter 3 lists the local governments that are subject to stormwater permit requirements and are therefore DMAs.

Planning Role of TMACOG

Finally, Chapter 3 describes the process TMACOG follows to maintain the Areawide Water Quality Management Plan. Review of updates and amendments is conducted through the TMACOG Environmental Council, which makes

recommendations. Those recommendations are acted upon by the TMACOG Executive Committee and Board of Trustees.