



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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ILLINOIS EPA CHARGE TO THE B-MAG

Basinwide water quality management involves many different elements of government activity. Planning, monitoring and measuring, study, permitting, enforcement and compliance assurance as well as a myriad of programs designed to develop and encourage best land use and management practices. These programs exist within and outside of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA). These programs were developed separately and generally exist in isolation from each other. As a result, there are overlapping protections and, possibly, the occasional gap. Indeed, many of these programs have been developed with a statewide, one-size-fits-all orientation.

Earlier this year and for the past several years, we have struggled with the implementation of water quality management planning linked with our Facility Planning Area (FPA) program. This program focuses on the planning for wastewater treatment capacity and the facilities that serve the population. As you may be aware, we recently contracted with a consultant to complete a Program Evaluation. Though there were several recommendations based on input from a stakeholders workgroup (many of which we are now looking to implement), the clear sentiment was that the FPA program is part of a broader structure of "piecemeal" management of water quality. To the consultant and stakeholders, the FPA process appeared to be disconnected from other state programs and one "size" most certainly did not fit all. It was recommended that the state should move toward a more holistic and interconnected watershed planning and protection framework. In this charge, we are fully embracing that concept for implementation.

Our overarching goal here is to eliminate overlaps and duplications in planning and protection while at the same time ensure greater efficiencies in water quality planning and management and better water quality protection overall. In order to begin the transitional process of moving toward a statewide watershed planning and protection program, I hereby charge the Basin-wide Management Advisory Group (B-MAG) to:

- Select a specific watershed for pilot testing of a comprehensive, coordinated basinwide planning and protection framework;
- Develop familiarity with the full range of federal, state and local water quality planning and protection activities and the specific programs and goals offered by each. Particularly important to the State are:

- Monitoring;
 - NPDES Permitting, including Phase I and Phase II Permitting;
 - Anti-degradation Analysis;
 - Control of Non-point source pollution;
 - Land use policies; and
 - Facility Planning Areas and Wastewater Treatment Programs
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- Identify a “delivery system” for guiding the implementation of customized programs within each basin;
 - Create or name a management structure for stakeholder involvement on the ground and within each basin; and
 - Forge agreement on a watershed by watershed phase-in of additional basins resulting in a five to seven year rotational schedule of planning and protection activities that provide coverage for the entirety of the state.

In this first brief set of conversations, I urge you to create a “Framework” for how the state and local groups should consider the inter-relationships among these programs as well as the “constants” (in terms of mandates, goals and structures) that must exist across watersheds. At the same time, I hope you will identify areas where flexible, site-specific policies are more apropos.

Every effort should be made to ensure that the total range of recommendations and characterizations are consensus-based, though Illinois EPA recognizes that the elements of these agreements may not be universally subscribed. At any time, the facilitator may move the group along to other discussions recording for Illinois EPA the points of contention. However, my further charge to you is that you endeavor to reach consensus on as many of the identified, preferred policy recommendations and characterizations as you can.

This charge is ambitious and your work promises to be difficult. Yet for both environmental and economic reasons, this dialogue and any resultant consensus is critically important to the State of Illinois. I pledge to offer Illinois EPA’s full support to your work. Governor Blagojevich and I thank you for your energy, your time and your commitment to the betterment of the state.



Renee Cipriano
Director