## VI. Administrative Procedures

*A. Executive Order 12866*

Executive Order 12866 (58 FR 51735, October 4, 1993) requires agencies to determine whether regulatory actions are ''significant'' and therefore subject to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review. It has been determined that today's notice of determinations is not a ''significant'' regulatory action, since it does not establish new requirements or lead to likely regulatory requirements (and therefore is not a regulatory action) and is a supplement to the second Report to Congress under the Great Waters program. A draft of this notice was submitted to OMB for review. Changes made in response to OMB suggestions or recommendations will be documented in the public record.

*B. Regulatory Flexibility*

The EPA has determined that it is not necessary to prepare a regulatory flexibility analysis in connection with these determinations since they are not rules of general applicability for which EPA is required to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking under the Administrative Procedure Act or any other statute. Moreover, these determinations that section 112 is adequate to prevent adverse effects from HAP deposition and that, therefore, no further regulations under section 112(m)(6) are necessary and appropriate, could not by their nature impose any direct or binding requirements on any person, and, therefore, could not impose any economic impacts on the regulated community or small entities.

*C. Congressional Review*

The Congressional Review Act, 5 U.S.C. 801 *et seq.*, as added by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996, does not apply because this action is not a rule, as that term is defined in 5 U.S.C. 804(3). Today's notice serves as a supplement to EPA's second Report to Congress under the Great Waters program and does not establish any binding rules of general applicability. Pursuant to the consent decree entered in *Sierra Club* v. *Browner*, Civ. No. 96–1680 (D.D.C.), EPA shall deliver to Congress a copy of the notice as a supplement to the second Report.

*D. Unfunded Mandates*

Today's determinations establish no Federal mandates. That is, they impose no enforceable duties on State, local or tribal governments, or on the private sector, since they do not establish binding regulations. Therefore, the requirements of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 do not apply to today's notice.

Dated: March 13, 1998.

**Carol M. Browner,**

*Administrator.*

[FR Doc. 98–7488 Filed 3–23–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560–50–P

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

## Department of Agriculture

**[FRL–5985–6]**

## Clean Water Act; Clean Water Action Plan

**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Agriculture.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of clean water action plan.

**SUMMARY:** In his 1998 State of the Union Address, President Clinton announced a major new Clean Water Initiative to speed the restoration of the nation's rivers, lakes, and coastal waters. This new initiative aims to achieve clean water by strengthening public health protection, targeting community-based watershed protection efforts at high priority areas, and providing communities with new resources to control polluted runoff.

On October 18, 1997, the 25th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, Vice President Gore directed the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to work with other Federal agencies and the public to prepare an aggressive Action Plan to meet the promise of clean, safe water for all Americans. The Action Plan forms the core of President Clinton's Clean Water Initiative in which he proposed $568 million in new resources in his Fiscal Year 1999 budget to carry it out. The Action Plan builds on the solid foundation of existing clean water programs and proposes new actions to strengthen efforts to restore and protect water resources.

In implementing the Action Plan, the federal government will: support locally led partnerships that include a broad array of watershed partners, including federal and state agencies, tribes, communities, businesses, and citizens to meet clean water and public health goals; increase financial and technical assistance to states, tribes, local governments, farmers, and others; and help states and tribes restore and sustain the health of aquatic systems on a watershed basis.

**ADDRESSES:** The Clean Water Action Plan is available for viewing on the Internet at

http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/cleanwater/ or

http://www.epa.gov/cleanwater/.

Copies of the Clean Water Action Plan may be obtained from EPA's National Center for Environmental Publications and Information, 1–800–490–9198 (toll free), P.O. Box 42419, Cincinnati, OH 45242; (513) 489–8695 (fax). Ask for EPA–840–R–98–001. Copies may also be obtained from Douglas Wilson, USDA–NRCS, Conservation Communications Staff, Room 0054—South Building, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013–2890, or by fax at (202) 720–6009.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ben Ficks, U.S. EPA, Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds, 401 M Street, S.W. (4501F), Washington, D.C. 20460; fax: 202–260–2529; email ficks.ben@epamail.epa.gov; or Douglas Wilson, USDA–NRCS Conservation Communications Staff, Room 0054—South Building P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013–2890; fax: 202–720–6009.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### Clean Water Action Plan Overview

### I. Clean Water—The Road Ahead

Over the past quarter century, America has made tremendous strides in cleaning up its rivers, lakes, and coastal waters. In 1972, the Potomac River was too dirty to swim in, Lake Erie was dying, and the Cuyahoga River was so polluted it burst into flames. Many rivers and beaches were little more than open sewers. The improvement in the health of the nation's waters is a direct result of a concerted effort to enhance stewardship of natural resources and to implement the environmental provisions of federal, state, tribal and local laws. In particular, the Clean Water Act has stopped billions of pounds of pollution from fouling the nation's water, doubling the number of waterways safe for fishing and swimming. Today, rivers, lakes, and coasts are thriving centers of healthy communities.

Despite tremendous progress, 40 percent of the nation's waterways assessed by states are still unsafe for fishing and swimming. Pollution from factories and sewage treatment plants, soil erosion, and wetland losses have been dramatically reduced. But runoff from city streets, rural areas, and other sources continues to degrade the environment and puts drinking water at risk. Fish in many waters still contain dangerous levels of mercury,

polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and other toxic contaminants.

After 25 years of progress, the nation's clean water program is at a crossroads. Implementation of the existing programs will not stop serious new threats to public health, living resources, and the nation's waterways, particularly from polluted runoff. These programs lack the strength, resources and framework to finish the job of restoring rivers, lakes and coastal areas. To fulfill the original goal of the Clean Water Act—''fishable and swimmable'' water for every American—the nation must chart a new course to address the pollution problems of the next generation.

In his 1998 State of the Union Address, President Clinton announced a major new Clean Water initiative to speed the restoration of the nation's precious waterways. This new initiative aims to achieve clean water by strengthening public health protection, targeting community-based watershed protection efforts at high priority areas, and providing communities with new resources to control polluted runoff.

On October 18, 1997, the 25th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, Vice-President Gore directed USDA and EPA to work with other federal agencies and the public to prepare an aggressive Action Plan to meet the promise of clean, safe water for all Americans. This Action Plan forms the core of President Clinton's Clean Water Initiative in which he proposed $568 million in new resources in his FY 1999 budget to carry it out. The Action Plan builds on the solid foundation of existing clean water programs and proposes new action to strengthen efforts to restore and protect water resources. In implementing the Action Plan, the federal government will support locally led partnerships that include a broad array of federal agencies, states, tribes, communities, businesses, and citizens to meet clean water and public health goals; increase financial and technical assistance to states, tribes, local governments, farmers and others; and help states and tribes restore and sustain the health of aquatic systems on a watershed basis.

## II. Four Tools for Clean Water

Federal, state, tribal, and local governments have many tools they can use to clean up and protect water resources. Regulation, economic incentives, technical assistance research, education, and accurate information all have a role to play in meeting clean water goals. The Action Plan is built around four key tools to achieve clean water goals.

*A Watershed Approach*

The Action Plan envisions a new, collaborative effort by federal, state, tribal, and local governments; the public; and the private sector to restore and sustain the health of watersheds in the nation. The watershed approach is the key to setting priorities and taking action to clean up rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.

Strong Federal and State Standards

The Action Plan calls for federal, state, and tribal agencies to revise standards where needed and make existing programs more effective. Effective standards are key to protecting public health, preventing polluted runoff, and ensuring accountability.

Natural Resource Stewardship

Most of the land in the nation's watersheds is cropland, pasture, rangeland, or forests, and most of the water that ends up in rivers, lakes, and coastal waters falls on these lands first. Clean water depends on the conservation and stewardship of these natural resources. The Action Plan calls on federal natural resource and conservation agencies to apply their collective resources and technical expertise to state and local watershed restoration and protection.

Informed Citizens and Officials

Clear, accurate, and timely information is the foundation of a sound and accountable water quality program. Informed citizens and officials make better decisions about their watersheds. The Action Plan calls on federal agencies to improve the information available to the public, governments, and others about the health of their watersheds and the safety of their beaches, drinking water, and fish.

*A. A Watershed Approach—The Key to the Future*

The Action Plan proposes a new collaborative effort by state, tribal, federal, and local governments, the private sector and the public to restore those watersheds not meeting clean water, natural resource, and public health goals and to sustain healthy conditions in other watersheds.

For the past 25 years, most water pollution control efforts relied on broadly applied national programs that reduced water pollution from individual sources, such as discharges from sewage treatment plants and factories, and from polluted runoff. Today, there is growing recognition that clean water strategies built on this foundation and tailored to specific watershed conditions are the key to the future.

Why Watersheds?

Clean water is the product of a healthy watershed—a watershed in which urban, agricultural, rangelands, forest lands, and all other parts of the landscape are well-managed to prevent pollution. Focusing on the whole watershed helps strike the best balance among efforts to control point source pollution and polluted runoff, and protect drinking water sources and sensitive natural resources such as wetlands. A watershed focus also helps identify the most cost-effective pollution control strategies to meet clean water goals.

Working at the watershed level encourages the public to get involved in efforts to restore and protect their water resources and is the foundation for building strong clean water partnerships. The watershed approach is the best way to bring state, tribal, federal, and local programs together to more effectively and efficiently clean up and protect waters. It is also the key to greater accountability and progress toward clean water goals.

Key Elements of the Watershed Approach

The Action Plan proposes a watershed approach built on several key elements.

1. *Unified Watershed Assessments.* States, tribes, and other federal agencies currently set priorities for watershed action in many different ways. For example, state water quality agencies are developing lists of impaired water bodies, defining source water protection areas for drinking water, identifying coastal protection priorities, and defining priority areas for agricultural assistance programs. Similarly, federal, state and tribal natural resource agencies set their priorities for watershed restoration and protection in various ways to meet their mandates for natural resource conservation. These processes are designed to meet valid objectives, but too often opportunities to work together to meet common goals are overlooked.

The Action Plan creates a strategic opportunity for states and tribes, in cooperation with federal land and resource managers on federal lands to take the lead in unifying these various existing efforts and leveraging scarce resources to advance the pace of progress toward clean water. As a number of states and tribes have demonstrated, they can meet existing requirements efficiently and develop more coordinated and comprehensive priorities on a watershed basis.

Unified watershed assessments are a vehicle to identify: watersheds that will

be targeted to receive significant new resources from the President's FY 1999 budget and beyond to clean up waters that are not meeting water quality goals; pristine or sensitive watersheds on federal lands where core federal and state programs can be brought together to prevent degradation of water quality; and threatened watersheds that need an extra measure of protection and attention.

2. *Watershed Restoration Action Strategies.* The Action Plan encourages states and tribes to work with local communities, the public, and federal environmental, natural resource, and land management agencies to develop strategies to restore watersheds that are not meeting clean water and natural resource goals. Watershed Restoration Action Strategies will spell out the most important causes of water pollution and resource degradation, detail the actions that all parties need to take to solve those problems, and set milestones by which to measure progress. Funds made available to federal agencies through the FY 1999 Clean Water and Watershed Restoration Budget Initiative will be used to help states implement these strategies.

3. *Watershed Pollution Prevention.* Protecting pristine or sensitive waters and taking preventive action when clean water is threatened by new activities in the watershed can be the most cost-effective approach to meeting clean water goals. The Action Plan encourages states, tribal, and federal agencies to bring core programs and existing resources together to support watershed pollution prevention strategies to keep clean waters clean.

4. *Watershed Assistance Grants.* Federal agencies will provide small grants to local organizations that want to take a leadership role in building local efforts to restore and protect watersheds. These grants will ensure that local communities and stakeholders can effectively engage in the process of setting goals and devising solutions to restore their watersheds.

*B. Strong Federal and State Standards*

The Action Plan calls on federal, state, and tribal governments to strengthen existing programs to support an accelerated effort to attack the nation's remaining water quality problems. Federal, state, and tribal standards for water quality and polluted runoff are key tools for protecting public health, preventing polluted runoff, and ensuring accountability. Some of the specific actions called for in the Action Plan are identified below.

1. *Improve Assurance that Fish and Shellfish are Safe to Eat.* Federal agencies will work with states and tribes to expand programs to reduce contaminants that can make locally caught fish and shellfish unsafe to eat, particularly mercury and other persistent, bio-accumulative toxic pollutants, and to ensure that the public gets clear notice of fish consumption risks.

2. *Ensure Safe Beaches.* Federal, state, and local governments will work to improve the capacity to monitor water quality at beaches, develop new standards, and use new technologies such as the Internet to report public health risks to recreational swimmers.

3. *Expand Control of Storm Water Runoff.* EPA will publish final Phase II storm water regulations for smaller cities and construction sites in 1999. EPA will also work with its partners to make sure that existing storm water control requirements for large urban and industrial areas are implemented.

4. *Improve State and Tribal Enforceable Authorities to Address Polluted Runoff.* Federal agencies will work with states and tribes to promote the establishment of state and tribal enforceable authorities to ensure the implementation of polluted runoff controls by the year 2000.

5. *Define Nutrient Reduction Goals.* EPA will establish by the year 2000 numeric criteria for nutrients (i.e., nitrogen and phosphorus) that reflect the different types of water bodies (e.g., lakes, rivers, and estuaries) and different ecoregions of the country and will assist states and tribes in adopting numeric water quality standards based on these criteria.

6. *Reduce Pollution from Animal Feeding Operations.* EPA will publish and, after public comment, implement an Animal Feeding Operation Strategy for important and necessary actions on standards and permits. In addition, by November 1998, EPA and USDA will jointly develop a broad, unified national strategy to minimize the environmental and public health impacts of Animal Feeding Operations.

*C. Natural Resource Stewardship*

Nearly 70 percent of the United States, exclusive of Alaska, is held in private ownership by millions of individuals. Fifty percent, or 907 million acres, is owned by farmers, ranchers, and their families. Another 400 million acres are federal lands. Most of the rainfall in the country falls on these lands before it enters rivers, lakes and coastal waters. Effective management of these croplands, pastures, forests, wetlands, rangelands, and other resources is key to keeping clean water clean and restoring watersheds where water quality is impaired.

The Action Plan commits all federal natural resource conservation and environmental agencies to focus their expertise and resources to support the watershed approach described above. In addition, these agencies will work with states, tribes, and others to enhance critical natural resources essential to clean water.

1. *Federal Land Stewardship.* More than 800 million acres of the United States, including Alaska, is federal land. These lands contain an immense diversity and wealth of natural resources, including significant sources of drinking water and public recreation opportunities.

By 1999, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and USDA will take the lead in developing a Unified Federal Policy to enhance watershed management for the protection of water quality and the health of aquatic systems on federal lands and for federal resource management. Federal land managers will improve water quality protection for over 2,000 miles of roads and trails each year through 2005 and decommission 5,000 miles each year by 2002. Federal land managers will also accelerate the cleanup rate of watersheds affected by abandoned mines and will implement an accelerated riparian stewardship program to improve or restore 25,000 miles of stream corridors by 2005.

2. *Protect and Restore Wetlands.* The Action Plan sets a goal of attaining a net increase of 100,000 wetland acres per year by the year 2005. This goal will be achieved by ensuring that existing wetland programs continue to slow the rate of wetland losses, improving federal restoration programs, and by expanding incentives to landowners to restore wetlands.

3. *Protect Coastal Waters.* Federal agencies, led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will work in partnership to improve the monitoring of coastal waters, expand research of emerging problems like Pfiesteria, amend Fishery Management Plans to address water quality issues, and ensure the implementation of strong programs to reduce polluted runoff to coastal waters.

4. *Provide Incentives for Private Land Stewardship.* The Action Plan relies on a substantial increase in the technical and financial assistance available to private landowners as the primary means of accelerating progress toward reducing polluted runoff from agricultural, range, and forest lands.

USDA, working with federal, state, tribal, and private partners, will

establish by 2002 two million miles of conservation buffers to reduce polluted runoff and protect watersheds, direct new funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to support watershed restoration, and develop as many new agreements with states as practicable to use the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to improve watersheds. The Plan also envisions new and innovative methods to provide incentives for private landowners to implement pollution prevention plans, including risk management protection for adoption of new pollution prevention technologies and market recognition for producers that meet environmental goals.

In addition, DOI will expand its existing Partners for Wildlife Program, which restores degraded fish and wildlife habitats and improves water quality through partnerships with landowners. The program provides technical and financial assistance, and gives priority to threatened and endangered species.

*D. Informed Citizens and Officials*

Effective management of water resources requires reliable information about water quality conditions and new tools to communicate information to the public. Federal agencies, led by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), will work with states and tribes to improve monitoring and assessment of water quality, focusing on nutrients and related pollutants. Federal agencies will also work with states and tribes to develop and use state-of-the-art systems, such as EPA's Index of Watershed Indicators on the Internet, to communicate meaningful information to the public about water quality conditions in their communities.

## III. Clean Water and Watershed Restoration Budget Initiative

To support the new and expanded efforts to restore and protect the nation's waters as proposed in the Clean Water Action Plan, the President's FY 1999 budget proposes a Clean Water and Watershed Restoration Budget Initiative. The funding provided in this budget initiative will dramatically increase federal financial support for clean water programs in FY 1999 and beyond. Specifically, the Clean Water and Watershed Restoration Budget Initiative will: increase direct support to states and tribes to carry out a watershed approach to clean water; increase technical and financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and foresters to reduce polluted runoff and enhance the natural resources on their lands; fund watershed assistance programs and grants to engage local communities and citizens in leadership roles in restoring their watersheds; accelerate progress in addressing critical water quality problems on federal lands, including those related to roads, abandoned mines, riparian areas, and rangelands; expand and coordinate water quality monitoring programs; and increase efforts to restore nationally significant watersheds, such as the Florida Everglades and the San Francisco Bay-Delta.

## IV. A Continuing Commitment to Clean Water

The publication of the Action Plan is just the beginning of a long-term effort. Many of the proposed actions will provide for later public review and comment and federal agencies are committed to working closely with states, tribes, and others to ensure successful implementation of specific actions.

In addition, regular reports will keep the public apprised of progress and remaining challenges. By the end of the year 2000 and periodically thereafter, status reports on progress in implementing watershed restoration plans and related programs will be provided to the President, the nation's governors, tribal leaders, and the public.

Dated: March 18, 1998.

**Robert Perciasepe,**

*Assistant Administrator, Office of Water, Environmental Protection Agency.*

**James R. Lyons,**

*Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture.*

[FR Doc. 98–7641 Filed 3–23–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560–50–P

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

**[FRL–5985–8]**

## Science Advisory Board

## Notification of Public Advisory Committee Meetings

**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, Pub. L. 92–463, notification is hereby given that several committees of the Science Advisory Board (SAB) will meet on the dates and times described below. All times noted are Eastern Time. All meetings are open to the public, however, due to limited space, seating at meetings will be on a first-come basis. For further information concerning specific meetings, please contact the individuals listed below. Documents that are the subject of SAB reviews are normally available from the originating EPA office and are *not* available from the SAB Office.

### 1. Environmental Economics Advisory Committee (EEAC)

The Environmental Economics Advisory Committee (EEAC) of the Science Advisory Board (SAB), will meet on April 9, 1998, from 9 am to no later than 4 pm in Room 1103 West Tower, US EPA, 401 M Street SW, Washington, DC 20460. The purpose of the meeting will be to plan Committee activities for the next twelve months. Topics to be discussed include the mission of the EEAC, economic analysis at the US EPA, and economics research planning.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Single copies of the information provided to the Committee can be obtained from Ms. Diana Pozun, Staff Secretary, Committee Operations Staff, Science Advisory Board (1400), U.S. EPA, 401 M Street SW., Washington DC 20460, telephone (202) 260–8414, fax (202) 260–7118, or via Email at: pozun.diana@epa.gov. Anyone wishing to make an oral presentation at the meeting must contact Mr. Thomas Miller, the Designated Federal Officer for the Environmental Economics Advisory Committee, *in writing* no later than 4 pm, April 3, 1998, at the above address, via fax (202) 260–7118, or via Email at: miller.tom@epa.gov. The request should identify the name of the individual who will make the presentation and an outline of the issues to be addressed. At least 35 copies of any written comments to the Committee are to be given to Mr. Miller no later than the time of the presentation for distribution to the Committee and the interested public. To discuss technical aspects of the meeting, please contact Mr. Miller by telephone at (202) 260–5886.

### 2. The Integrated Risk Project (IRP) Steering Committee (IRP–SC)

The Integrated Risk Project (IRP) Steering Committee, an *ad hoc* committee established by the Executive Committee of the Science Advisory Board (SAB), will meet on April 13–14, 1998 at the Quality Hotel, 1200 North Courthouse Road, Arlington, VA, telephone (703) 524–4000. The meeting will begin at 8:30 am on April 13, and end no later than 5:30 pm on April 14, 1998. The purpose of the meeting is to review and reach closure on two draft reports that are being developed as part of the Integrated Risk Project. The