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NONPOINT SOURCES OF WATER POLLUTION

by Sharon L. Rollins

Nonpoint sources of water pollution are defined as land and air use activities that contribute to pollution of ground and/or surface water as a result of runoff, seepage, or percolation. Major sources of nonpoint source pollution are agriculture runoff, urban runoff, leachate from septic tanks and landfills, runoff from forestry and mining operations, and hydrologic modifications. Nonpoint sources of water pollution are responsible for approximately three-fourths of the water quality problems in Tennessee.

The Clean Water Act of 1987 (Act) requires states to begin addressing the problem of nonpoint sources of water pollution. The first requirement is for states to submit to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) an Assessment Report which:

1. identifies navigable state waters which cannot be expected to attain or maintain applicable water quality standards without additional action to control nonpoint source pollution;

2. identifies major pollutants and significant pollutant categories;

3. identifies best management practices and measures to solve each category of nonpoint source pollution; and

4. identifies and describes state and local programs to implement nonpoint source control.

The states must then prepare a Management Program for controlling nonpoint sources of pollution. The Assessment Report and the Management Program are due to EPA by August 1988.

Specific contents of the program must include: an identification of the best management practices and measures which will be undertaken to reduce pollution loadings; an identification of programs such as enforcement, technical assistance, financial assistance, education, training, and technology transfer to achieve implementation of best management practices; a schedule of annual milestones for program implementation; assurance that the laws of the state provide authority to implement a management program; and identification of federal financial assistance programs.

After a state submits a Nonpoint Source Management Program, EPA has 180 days to either approve or disapprove the program. Once a state has an approved management program, the state may apply to EPA for funds to award grants for the purpose of implementing nonpoint source pollution control programs. The federal share of each management program implemented can be up to sixty percent. The Act authorizes appropriations not to exceed $70,000,000 for fiscal year 1988, $100,000,000 for fiscal years 1989 and 1990, and $130,000,000 for fiscal year 1991.

The Act establishes the following order of priority in making grants to those Management Programs which:

1. control difficult or serious nonpoint source pollution resulting from mining activities;

2. implement innovative methods or practices;

3. control interstate nonpoint source pollution problems; or

4. provide for ground water quality protection.

The approach that the state of Tennessee has taken to comply with the Act is to seek input from various interest groups. Nonpoint source water pollution is a broad issue that cuts across many political, geographic, and environmental regulation boundaries. The Tennessee Department of Health and Environment (TDH&E) staff, charged with the mission of implementing the Act requirements on this issue, are housed in the Division of Construction Grants and Loans. Dr. Andrew Barrass oversees the TDH&E effort to achieve compliance with the Act. An in-house Steering Committee composed of personnel from TDH&E's Office of Water Management, Division of Construction Grants and Loans, Division of Water Pollution Control, Division of Ground Water Control, and Division of Water Supply, have input to this process. In addition, a Management Advisory Group representing interest and expertise in the areas of urban runoff and land disposal, resource extraction, agriculture and forestry, and hydrologic modification throughout the state has been convened. These groups will have input to the Assessment Report and Management Program development.

Further information on this important emerging topic may be obtained by contacting Dr. Andrew Barrass, TDH&E, Division of Construction Grants and Loans, (615) 741-0638. Articles on Nonpoint Source Water Pollution will be appearing in *Tech Trends* during the first quarter of 1988.

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