

# Chapter 4

## Watershed Health & Water Quality

**REGIONAL FRAMEWORK PLAN  
CHAPTER 4 WATERSHED HEALTH & WATER QUALITY**

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## Chapter 4 Watershed Health and Water Quality

### Introduction

Watershed management and clean water are essential for healthy communities, a sound economy and habitat for fish and wildlife. They are also keys to a region's livability and future growth, as well as the quality of drinking water. The interconnected web of rivers and streams, which have played an important role in the region's history and economic success, are also important to the commerce, agriculture and economic vitality of the region.

This chapter contains policies related to maintaining watershed health to benefit people, fish and wildlife, focused in the following areas:

- **Water Supply.** Clean and sufficient quantities of water are essential to the people of the region, as well as their commerce, agriculture and economic viability. It is not only important to have adequate supply, but that supply must reach people throughout the region. How water is supplied can impact fish and wildlife habitats by reducing the amount of water in streams and rivers. This highlights the important linkage between growth management and water supply planning. The Metro Council has communicated to the region's water providers that its main interests in water supply planning and implementation are water conservation and the link between land use and water supply. Metro has not assumed any function related to transmission, storage and distribution of drinking water.
- **Water Quality.** Tremendous advances have been made in the last 25 years to improve regional water quality and protect natural resources and open spaces. Future growth and development, however, will place increasing demands on the region's natural resources and affect water quality. Metro recognizes this inherent conflict and strives to implement policies that protect natural resources and water quality while the region grows.
- **Watershed Management.** Watershed management is a planning tool that recognizes the dynamic connectivity between different components of a watershed. It identifies land use and management activities that protect the functions of natural systems while achieving desired land use patterns. Metro recognizes that citizens are concerned about protecting resources and maintaining open spaces to enhance the region's livability.
- **Stormwater Management.** Management of stormwater as the region grows is crucial to the protection of urban water resources. Stormwater is both a valuable resource and a management problem. As a resource, it is potentially beneficial to critical fish and wildlife habitat, recharges groundwater, and may contribute to cooler water to urban waterways during hotter, low flow summer months. As a management challenge, it can add to flooding, destroy fish and wildlife habitat, and pollute groundwater and surface waters.

These policies strive to address the inherent conflict between the function of natural systems and the effects of growth and development in the region. In order to meet the challenge of formulating policy in coordination with local jurisdictions and citizens, it is essential to acknowledge the dynamic process whereby such policies will continue to be developed and refined.

This chapter includes the specific policies adopted to guide Metro in future planning for watershed health, including water supply, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat.

## **Policies**

### **4.1 Water Supply**

It is the policy of the Metro Council to:

- 4.1.1 Promote and achieve regional water conservation and demand management goals as defined in the Regional Water Supply Plan.
- 4.1.2 Promote the coordination between regional growth management programs and water supply planning.
- 4.1.3 Promote the coordination between land use planning and achieving the goals of the Regional Water Supply Plan.
- 4.1.4 Set benchmarks and evaluate achievement of the targets and goals established in the Regional Water Supply Plan in coordination with the region's water providers.
- 4.1.5 Evaluate Metro's role in encouraging conservation on a regional basis to promote the efficient use of water resources and develop any necessary regional plans/programs to address Metro's role in coordination with the region's water providers.

### **4.2 Overall Watershed Management**

It is the policy of the Metro Council to:

- 4.2.1 Develop a long-term regional strategy for comprehensive water resource management, created in partnership with the jurisdictions and agencies charged with planning and managing groundwater resources and terrestrial and aquatic habitats by:
  - a. Managing watersheds to protect, restore and ensure to the maximum extent practicable the integrity of streams, wetlands and floodplains, and their multiple biological, physical and social values;
  - b. Complying with state and federal water quality requirements;

- c. Protecting designated beneficial water uses;
- d. Promoting multi-objective management of the region's watershed to the maximum extent practicable; and
- e. Encouraging the use of techniques relying on natural processes to address flood control, stormwater management, abnormally high winter and low summer stream flows and nonpoint pollution reduction.

### **4.3 Water Quality**

It is the policy of the Metro Council to:

#### **4.3.1 Protect, enhance, and restore the water quality of the region by:**

- a. Implementing and coordinating watershed-wide planning.
- b. Promoting the protection of natural areas along waterways and encouraging continuous improvement of water quantity and quality through liaison with agencies that influence changes along streams, rivers and wetlands in the Metro region.
- c. Establishing and maintaining vegetative corridors along streams.
- d. Encouraging urban development practices that minimize soil erosion.
- e. Implementing best management practices (BMPs).
- f. Establishing standards to conserve, protect, and enhance riparian fish and wildlife habitat.
- g. Protecting wetlands values with sufficient buffers to maintain their water quality and hydrologic function.

### **4.4 Stormwater Management**

It is the policy of the Metro Council to:

#### **4.4.1 Encourage the following regional policies for stormwater management by:**

- a. Ensuring that as development and redevelopment occur increases in stormwater runoff are avoided to the maximum extent practicable.

- b. Managing stormwater so that runoff is retained as close as practicable to the site at which development or redevelopment occurs, in a manner that avoids negative quality and quantity impacts on adjacent streams, wetlands, groundwater and other water bodies.
- c. Ensuring that, to the maximum extent practicable, the quality of stormwater leaving a site after development is equal to or better than before development.
- d. Ensuring that, to the maximum extent practicable, the quantity of stormwater leaving a site after development is equal to or less than before development.
- e. Ensuring that stormwater quantity and quality issues are addressed during design of transportation facilities.

#### **4.5 Urban Planning and Natural Systems**

It is the policy of the Metro Council to:

- 4.5.1 Promote the incorporation of natural watershed systems into future planning and design processes and balance their contributions to environmental improvement with recreational and other uses.
- 4.5.2 Address the interrelatedness of greenspace protection, land use, transportation and water resources management issues.

(RFP Chapter 4 renamed from "Water Management" to "Watershed Health and Water Quality"; updated Policy No. 4.3.1; and deleted Policy No. 4.6.)