

EPA's Water Quality Framework

Next Steps Toward Improved Accountability

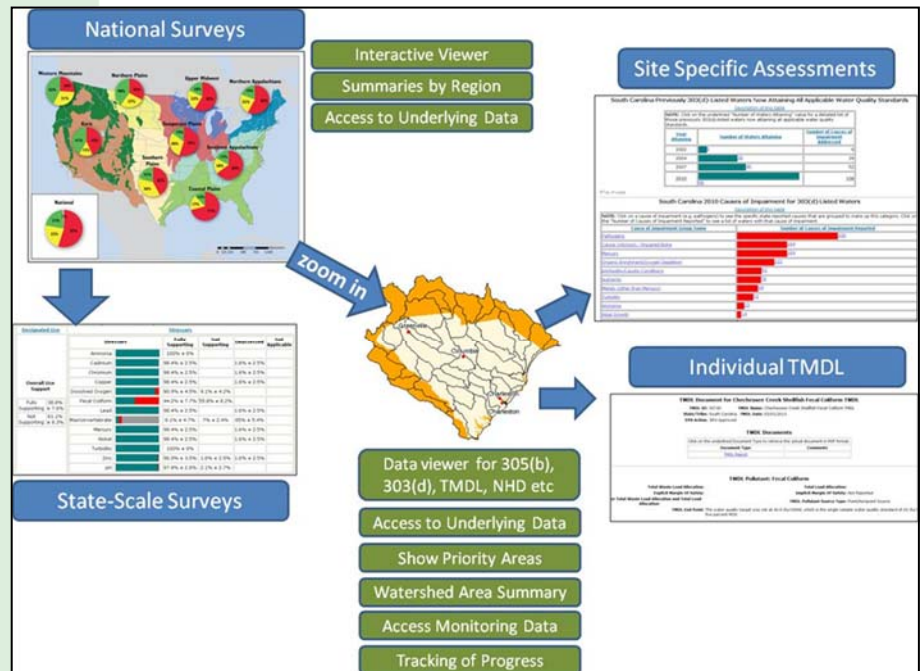
What is EPA's Water Quality Framework?

The Water Quality Framework is a new way of integrating EPA's data and information systems to more fully support water quality managers. The Framework will streamline water quality assessment and reporting while providing a more complete picture of the nation's water quality.

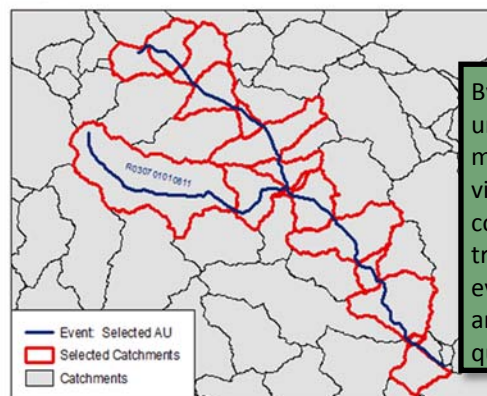
Benefits of this approach

Integrating data systems through the implementation of the Water Quality Framework:

- Reduces state burden by streamlining the Clean Water Act assessment and reporting process;
- Provides the means to tell the 'whole' story from monitoring to assessment to restoration;
- Provides better measurement and reporting of water quality improvement;
- Provides more transparency in water quality decision making;
- Allows for tools that can be used to identify relevant monitoring data for water quality assessments;
- Supports state development of tools to automate the screening of monitoring data against water quality standards; and
- Connects data, decisions, and actions geo-spatially.



This graphic represents how the Framework will integrate assessment information on EPA's public web site. This user could start at the national scale, interacting with data and summary information from EPA's National Aquatic Resource Surveys. From there, the user will be able to navigate to a state-scale survey to see conditions and progress across the state, and then zoom into state priority areas and track site-specific assessments and restoration activities.



Step K.6. Final Catchments associated with the selected Event (AssessmentUnit).

By linking state assessment units to the NHDPlus catchments, the Framework provides a nationally consistent geo-fabric for tracking progress and evaluating relationships among various water quality programs.

More information is available at the Framework SharePoint site: <https://usepa.sharepoint.com/sites/OW/Work/WQF/>



Implementing the Framework

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 2014 | <p>Initiate ATTAINS Redesign Workgroups</p> <p>Implement new geoprocessing approaches</p> <p>Workgroup report-outs</p> <p>Research options for sensor data</p> |
| 2015 | <p>Redesign ATTAINS based on partner input</p> <p>Conduct 'experiment' for sensor data</p> <p>Use new approaches for new 303(d) program measures</p> <p>Release ATTAINS for 2016 Integrated Report</p> <p>Initiate open-source community for tools to automate portions of the state assessment process</p> <p>Initiate support to partners to transition to the new Framework</p> |
| 2016 | <p>Update public website to give a more holistic view of water quality</p> <p>Test new approaches for water quality restoration measures</p> <p>Conduct study of 'lessons learned' from 2016 Integrated Report cycle</p> |
| 2017 | <p>Make revisions based on lessons learned</p> <p>Final release of ATTAINS for 2018 Integrated Report</p> |
| 2018 | <p>Begin Phase II of the Framework to incorporate 'Actions' (Non-point source grants, permits, etc.)</p> |

Framework Components

STORET/WQX: Making Water Quality Monitoring Data Easily Accessible and Available to the Public

Under the Framework, STORET/WQX will continue to provide easy access to monitoring data via the **Water Quality Portal**. Additional Framework activities include:

- Developing approaches for **sharing continuous data**
- Further streamlining the discovery of monitoring data and working with partners to develop **tools to automatically screen monitoring data against water quality criteria**

Assessment TMDL Tracking and Implementation System (ATTAINS): Providing public access to CWA assessment conclusions and restoration plans, and communicating progress towards restoring water quality

ATTAINS will be redesigned as part of the Framework. A new interface will be developed to provide easy submittal of state 303(d)/305(b) Integrated Reporting and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) information, as well as a single location for EPA review of state impaired water lists and TMDLs. Some other key activities include:

- Streamline reporting of **water quality measures**
- Providing **linkages** between **water quality assessments** and **monitoring data**
- Provide more **transparent** and **timely** access to **state assessment and TMDL data**

NHDPlus: Providing a nationally consistent geofabric for tracking progress and evaluating relationships between various water quality programs

The NHDPlus is a key component of the Framework. It will provide the backbone for a number of EPA's water quality measures. EPA will:

- Use the NHDPlus **catchments** to provide a **consistent** and **streamlined** way to **demonstrate** the **progress that states are making in restoring and protecting** water quality
- Use **automated approaches** for **mapping state data** to the NHDPlus