Water Quality & Quantity

Background

When referencing water, clarification of "type or area" needs to be identified in order to understand the regulations and controls which vary accordingly. In brief, the following information introduces most discussion and reference topics available on water quality and quantity and focuses on the following themes: Ground Water, Drinking Water**,** Lakes, Wetlands, Wastewater, Stormwater, Rivers and Streams, Oceans, Coasts, Estuaries, and Beaches.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) is the cornerstone of surface water quality protection in the United States. (The Act does not deal directly with groundwater nor with water quantity issues.) The statute employs a variety of regulatory and non-regulatory tools to reduce direct pollutant discharges into waterways, finance municipal wastewater treatment facilities, and manage polluted runoff. These tools are employed to achieve the broader goal of restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters so that they can support "the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife, and recreation in and on the water."
(www2.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act)

Federal Programs

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW), together with states, tribes, and its many partners, protects public health by ensuring safe drinking water and protecting ground water. OGWDW, along with EPA's ten regional drinking water programs, oversees implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act, which is the national law safeguarding tap water in America. (http://water.epa.gov)

U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
The mission of the Energy Department is to ensure America's security and prosperity by addressing its energy, environmental, and nuclear challenges through transformative science and technology solutions. The DOE leads the growing global effort to tap the power of the ocean's waves and tides, while supporting innovations to optimize U.S. hydropower production.
(http://energy.gov/eere/renewables/water)

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
As the leading federal agency for assisting in restoring watershed health on private land, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to producers who implement conservation practices and management strategies, including the restoration and protection of wetlands that benefit water quality and improve water management. (www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/water)

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
As the nation's environmental engineer, the Army Corps of Engineers manages one of the largest federal environmental missions: restoring degraded ecosystems, constructing sustainable facilities, regulating waterways, managing natural resources, and cleaning up contaminated sites from past military activities. USACE districts strive to achieve sustainability while providing a full range of environmental quality (compliance, conservation, and pollution prevention) support to military installations throughout the world, seeking ways and means to assess and integrate natural resource laws, values, and sound environmental practices.
(www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/EnvironmentalSupportforOthers.aspx)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
The FWS mission is working with others to protect, conserve, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats, for the continuing benefit of the American people. The FWS is the main federal agency dedicated to protecting wildlife and their habitat from pollution's harmful effects, helping to create a healthy world for all living things. (www.fws.gov/contaminants/issues/waterquality.cfm)

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
As a steward, NOAA Fisheries has an obligation to conserve, protect, and manage living marine resources in a way that ensures their continuation as functioning components of marine ecosystems, affords economic opportunities, and enhances the quality of life for the American public. Under this mission, the goal is to optimize the benefits to the nation through sound science and management, and to promote healthy ecosystems. NOAA Fisheries also plays a supportive and advisory role in the management of living marine resources in coastal areas under state jurisdiction, provides scientific and policy leadership in the international arena, and implements international conservation and management measures as appropriate. (www.nero.noaa.gov)

National Park Service (NPS)
The NPS Water Quality Program is part of the Aquatic Systems Branch of the Water Resources Division. Water quality activities are broadly categorized into three program areas: 1) national program coordination and management, 2) project proposal development, funding, and management, and 3) technical assistance and support to parks. Currently, the primary focus of the program is on managing the Vital Signs Water Quality Monitoring program. Considerable support is also provided for managing the NPS-USGS Water Quality Partnership program and participating on interagency groups like the National Water Quality Monitoring Council. Technical assistance to parks on water quality and contaminants issues remains a high priority. (http://nature.nps.gov/water/waterquality)

The River Network

The River Network's mission is to empower and unite people and communities to protect and restore rivers and other waters that sustain the health of our country. Founded in 1988, the River Network is leading a national watershed protection movement that includes nearly 2000 state, regional, and local grassroots organizations whose primary mission is to protect rivers and watersheds. The staff is headquartered in Portland, Oregon, with field offices in Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, and Utah. (www.rivernetwork.org/)