

What is a 319 watershed project & How can it benefit local residents?

A 319 watershed project includes two different phases.....the assessment phase and the implementation phase. A summary of each of these phases and many of the associated benefits are listed below.

Watershed Assessment Phase - The assessment phase is the first step used by SCD's to evaluate water quality conditions in a watershed. The purposes of an assessment phase project are to determine water quality conditions as well as identify the causes and sources of the documented water quality problems. Basic components of a typical assessment project are as follows:

- 1) Current water quality conditions are measured to determine if there are any impacts or concerns.
 - * Collect samples to track concentrations trends for nitrogen, phosphorus, total suspended solids, and fecal coliform bacteria.
 - * Collect macroinvertebrate data
 - * Measure stream flow and calculate nutrient and sediment loadings
- 2) Sources and causes of pollutants impacting water quality are identified.
 - * Riparian/streambank conditions are characterized.
 - * Crop types and cropland management are determined
 - * Livestock feeding and grazing management practices are evaluated.
 - * As applicable, other sources are evaluated (e.g., mining areas, urban areas, etc.)
- 3) Solicit input from local resident to gauge interest and determine the most feasible management options for addressing any water quality concerns.
- 4) Summarize the assessment data and develop a report for the SCD to use when making future watershed management decisions and/or when developing plans to address any identified water quality concerns.

Watershed Implementation Phase - The watershed implementation phase is the “product” of the assessment phase efforts. Based on the information collected during the assessment, the local sponsors and residents establish specific water quality improvement/restoration goals for the watershed; identify what needs to be done to meet those goals; as well as set a budget for implementing the project. All this information is included in a multi-year watershed project implementation plan (PIP). Basic components of a PIP are as follows:

- 1) Clear set of goals and objectives for addressing the documented water quality problems
 - * Specific water quality improvement targets are set
 - * Types and amount of best management practices are established
 - * Priority areas are identified for directing technical and financial assistance
 - * Timelines are set for implementing the project and tracking progress in water quality improvement and BMP application.
- 2) A watershed coordinator is employed to manage the project and provide technical assistance to producers and other residents.
- 3) An educational program is developed to provide information on new management techniques, equipment, alternative practices, etc.
- 4) Coordination plan identifying key partners that may provide financial and technical support.

5) Monitoring plan to track and document water quality benefits resulting from BMP implementation.

6) Multi-year budget for supporting project staff, educational events, monitoring activities and BMP cost share to producers and landowners.

Benefits of a 319 Watershed Project - There are many benefits that local residents/producers and resource managers can realize through a 319 watershed project. These benefits start with the assessment phase and continue through the implementation of a watershed project. Some of the most common benefits include:

1) Questions regarding water quality issues in the watershed are answered

2) Direction for planning and implementing conservation practices and other corrective measures

3) Better understanding of producer and landowner needs in the watershed

4) Track record of efforts applied and progress to improve water quality and land management

5) Expanded and/or stronger partnerships that may provide more opportunities for financial and technical assistance through other federal or state programs. For example, greater coordination with the USDA EQIP Program or increased engineering support through the Livestock Facilities Assistance Program.

6) Access to information on new equipment, different management issues and/or BMP options in the watershed.

7) Section 319 funding is allocated specifically for the watershed project to cost share BMP implementation as well as support project management and staff.

8) The Section 319 funding is locally administered which greatly streamlines the BMP planning and cost share process. These funds are also awarded in a "lump-sum" to cover the costs for the entire project period (up to 5 years) which eliminates the uncertainties associated with an annual allocation process.

9) Project staff employed by the sponsors to provide one-on-one technical assistance to producers and landowners; coordinate educational events; manage Section 319 BMP cost share funds; solicit additional funding options; and monitor progress.