

Integration of General Planning Issues and Watershed Planning Concepts

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Section I. Introduction

San Diego County encompasses an area of over 4000 square miles in the southwest corner of California. The County is bounded on the north by Orange and Riverside counties, on the east by Imperial County, on the south by Mexico, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. The northwest to southeast trending Peninsular Range, the most prominent topographic feature in the region divides the County into the San Diego and Colorado hydrologic regions. The Peninsular Range includes the Santa Ana, Agua Tibia, Palomar, Hot Springs, Aguanga, Volcan, Cuyamaca, and Laguna Mountain systems and reaches a maximum elevation of over 6,500 feet above mean sea level.

There are a total of 11 hydrologic units (HUs) in the San Diego Hydrologic Region (SDHR), encompassing a land area of nearly 3,000 square miles, illustrated in Figure 1 below. Eight major stream systems originate on the western slope of the Peninsular Range and discharge into the Pacific Ocean. From north to south they are San Juan Creek, and the Santa Margarita, San Luis Rey, San Dieguito, San Diego, Sweetwater, Olay, and Tijuana Rivers. In addition, there are three HUs whose headwaters are located between the Peninsular Range and the Pacific Ocean. These include the Carlsbad, Los Penasquitos, and Pueblo San Diego units.



Figure 1. The 11 hydrologic units in the San Diego Hydrologic Region.

Residential, agricultural and undeveloped land uses are generally the most important in terms of area in the SDHR with substantial variations occurring between the 11 hydrologic units. Approximately 50% of the land area west of the Peninsular Range is currently undeveloped. Of this vacant land, 40% is planned for future development, mainly for residential use. The current land use distribution in the SDHR also includes residential (15%), commercial/ industrial (5%), parks/ open space (10%), freeways/ roads (6%), and agriculture (13%). The activities associated with these land uses generate a variety of water pollutants.

The surface water, coastal, and groundwater resources of the SDHR support numerous economic, water supply, recreational, and habitat-related beneficial uses. San Diego County is also host to a diverse array of natural habitats including montane forests, chaparral covered hillsides, coastal sage scrub, riparian woodlands, freshwater wetlands, coastal salt and brackish marshes, vernal pools, lagoons, enclosed bays, tide pools, and open ocean. These areas support numerous unique and sensitive biological habitats and are home to rare, threatened, and endangered animal and plant species like the California gnatcatcher, the arroyo toad, the southwestern pond turtle, the salt marsh daisy, and the Otay Mesa mint.

The region's rapid economic development and urbanization has resulted in many of the water bodies in the SDHR being identified as impaired on the California 303(d) list for a host of conditions including elevated coliform bacteria and trace metals, aquatic and sediment toxicity, nutrient enrichment, and sedimentation. Several water bodies are impaired for multiple stressors including Mission Bay, Chollas Creek, and the Tijuana River. Mitigating the widespread impairments to beneficial uses and protecting and restoring the ecological integrity of the County's diverse habitats will be among the region's most important future challenges (Project Clean Water, 2001).

One major contributor to receiving water quality impairment is urban runoff. In February 2001, the San Diego Region of the State Water Resources Control Board issued the San Diego Municipal Stormwater Permit to reduce stormwater pollutant loadings into receiving waters throughout San Diego County. To achieve this goal, each of the Copermittees, which includes the 18 incorporated cities, the San Diego Unified Port District, and the County of San Diego, has developed a Jurisdictional Urban Stormwater Runoff Management Program (URMP). These Jurisdictional URMPs are designed to reduce discharges of pollutants and flow into and from the municipal conveyance systems to the maximum extent practicable. Additionally, each of the Copermittees within a particular watershed are responsible for collaboratively developing and implementing a Watershed URMP to manage urban runoff within watershed boundaries rather than political boundaries.

As the principal Copermittee, the County of San Diego decided to utilize Project Clean Water to facilitate compliance with the Municipal Stormwater Permit. Project Clean Water is a framework for regional commitment to protect and improve water quality. This framework consists of four Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) and a host of Technical Workgroups that report to one or more TAC. The Comprehensive Planning TAC provides direction and oversight on strategic planning issues. Additionally, the Watershed URMP and Watershed Coordination Technical Workgroups report to this TAC on a monthly basis (see Figure 2 below).

During Phase I of Project Clean Water, the Comprehensive Planning TAC created an inventory of planning programs and activities applicable regionally, jurisdictionally, or on a watershed basis. This inventory is organized by watershed and illustrates specific planning efforts for each of the 11 watersheds in the San Diego Hydrologic Region. Additionally, the TAC categorized these planning efforts under broad planning approaches. In Phase II of Project Clean Water, the TAC decided to supplement this effort by clearly identifying and characterizing the linkages between these various planning efforts and watershed planning.

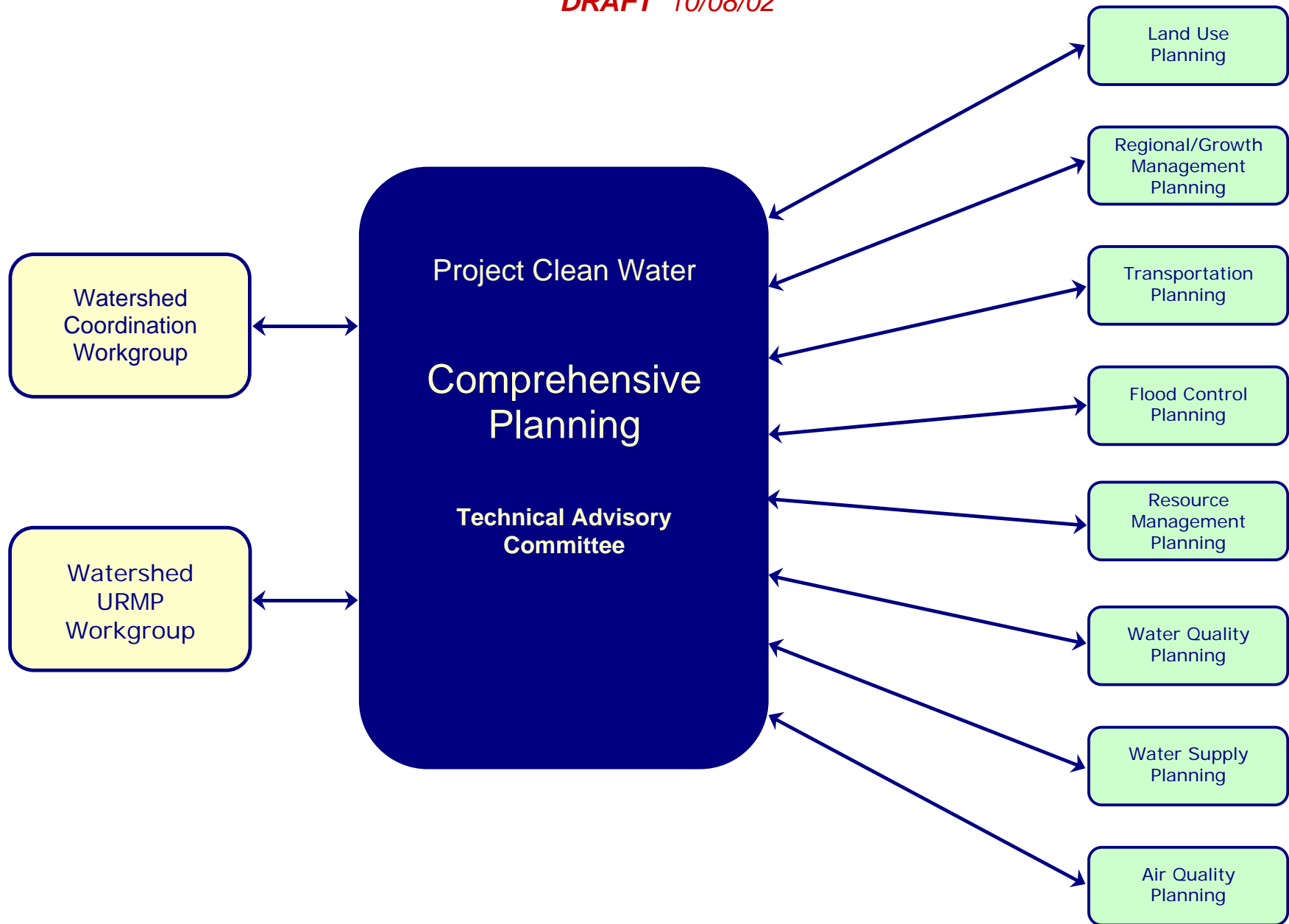


Figure 2. Role of the Project Clean Water Comprehensive Planning Technical Advisory Committee.

Section II. Issue Statement

Effective, implementable, and comprehensive watershed management is vital to sustain and improve water quality and supply. Planning is the backbone of such watershed management. The multitude of factors affecting watersheds must be appreciated in the planning process and watershed management plans should be as integrated as the environment itself. To this end, this document is designed to identify and characterize the linkages between various planning types and watershed planning.

Section III. Analysis of the Relationship between Planning and Watershed Planning Concepts

A. Regional Planning

1. Land Use Planning

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Watersheds are hydrologically defined geographic areas which integrate a variety of environmental processes and are influenced by both nature and man. Much of the runoff within a watershed is caused by some form of precipitation; however, geographic and physical conditions within the watershed influence the runoff flow and quality (Fan & Bras, 1998; Mohseni & Stefan, 1998; Sabater, Sabater, & Armengol, 1990; Tippet, Cooter, & Guglielmono, 1993). The integration of natural and anthropogenic factors in a watershed are readily illustrated by the impact of urbanization on water quality and flow regimes.

Urban land uses contain a mixture of pervious and impervious surfaces. Pervious surfaces allow for infiltration of precipitation, resulting in surface runoff only during significant precipitation events. This process acts as a natural buffer for surface runoff; thus decreasing runoff flow rates and volumes (Nix, 1994). On the other hand, impervious surfaces, frequently characterized by structures, parking lots, and paved transportation areas, are hydrologically active and promote runoff by inhibiting the assimilation of precipitation and pollutants (Nix, 1994; Novotny, Sung, Bannerman, & Baum, 1985; Schueler, 1994). The runoff rate and volume from an urban system are much higher than non-urban settings since there is reduced pervious land cover, which would normally absorb runoff and slow the runoff rate (Heathcote, 1998). The increased flow rates and volumes associated with impervious surfaces have a number of other deleterious effects, including flooding, stream erosion, and habitat destruction (Heathcote, 1998; Nix, 1994).

a. Characterization of the relationship between current planning efforts and watershed planning

Sections 65000 et seq. of the California Government Code give local governments the authority and the responsibility to exercise local land use planning functions, including those which apply to general plans, subdivisions, and zoning. Because they ultimately control the types and intensities of particular activities which may be allowed within specified geographic areas, land use decisions play a critical role in addressing point and non-point sources of pollution. Local governments and stakeholders have taken specific actions to review and revise their existing land use planning processes as necessary to incorporate water quality and watershed protection principles and policies. Stakeholders are building upon those actions by increasing cooperation across jurisdictional boundaries to address common watershed causes of water quality impairments.

Cities and counties have traditionally exercised their land use planning authorities independently, often with little consideration of the chemical, biological, and physical processes which govern the generation, transport, and fate of contaminants and stressors at watershed or other scales (air basins, etc.). As a result, the land use policies of individual municipalities continue to have significant potential for affecting water quality in areas beyond their jurisdictional boundaries. Clearly it makes little sense to pursue land use planning policies which fail to consider decisions affecting upstream and/or downstream uses within the same basin. Stakeholders are addressing this issue by establishing a

mechanism to facilitate collaborative watershed-based land use planning with neighboring local governments within the watershed(s) for which they share responsibility.

Watershed Urban Runoff Management Programs (WURMPs) are being developed for nine watersheds in the County of San Diego that drain to the Pacific Ocean. These programs are designed to identify and prioritize local water quality problems that can be attributed to urban runoff and provide solutions to mitigating these problems. These WURMPs look at land use as one component of watershed management and detail impervious surfaces as a major component to water quality degradation.

Numerous organizations across the county are developing watershed management plans to assess past, future, and current watershed conditions and impairments, identify and compile stakeholder needs and expectations, and provide direction and motivate decision makers to choose the best path toward healthy watersheds. These plans are being funded by watershed organizations and grants from state and federal sources. The ultimate goal of these plans is land use decisions that would restore the health of the watersheds.

b. Recommendations to facilitate the incorporation of watershed planning in future planning efforts

1. Smart Growth. Smart Growth has arisen out of the desire to check urban sprawl in our cities and municipalities. The trend toward abandoning existing infrastructure and rebuilding it again in a suburban setting has many planners, government officials, and citizens alarmed about the repercussions of where such a policy might leave our watersheds and environment as well as our pocketbooks. Smart growth establishes compact, walkable communities with mixed business and residential centers. These centers will be located around transportation corridors providing access to mass transit, carpooling, and jobs. The City of San Diego has developed a strategy to implement smart growth principles titled *City of Villages*. The City of Villages plan was developed as part of the Strategic Framework Element of The City's General Plan and hopes to determine where and how new growth and redevelopment will occur. The plan focuses on enhancing and reinforcing existing patterns of development in the City. Benefits of this plan include decrease imperviousness (roads, parking lots, development) and increased utilization of lands where strip malls and parking lots prevail and driving is a necessity. Other benefits include reduction of air pollution due to increased accessibility and reliance on mass transit, water quality benefits from a reduction in urban runoff and management of current runoff flows, and a sense of community and place.

Public outreach is a major component of The City of Villages Plan, helping to make paradigm shifts in the thought processes of the citizens with regard to their individual effect on watersheds. These shifts are going to be required if there is ever going to be a policy of transit centers focusing on public transportation. The Plan lays out different "Villages/centers" for various uses. For example, downtown would be high population density housing with business and cultural mixed in and transit centers would connect neighborhoods and provide access to suburban villages.

2. Water Quality Assessment. Water Quality Assessment, will form the informational basis for all watershed activities and programs later initiated local governments, including land use planning. Local governments will consider the role of land use planning during the development of their overall control strategies for specific issues and problems identified as priorities for the watershed. As appropriate, specific data, information, and/or recommendations will be developed or compiled during the Water Quality Assessment process for consideration by land use planners and other decision makers to ensure adequate consideration of watershed-level problems and solutions.

3. Staff Training. In addition to providing general education on water quality and watershed issues during their existing training programs for staff with land use planning and project approval responsibilities, local governments and stakeholders will endeavor to integrate information which is specific to the individual watersheds for which they share responsibility. Information gathered during the Water Quality Assessment phase described above will form the basis of watershed-specific training elements developed either individually or collaboratively by stakeholders.

4. Information / Materials Sharing. Continued collaboration on the development of Watershed URMPs will necessarily result in the identification and/or generation of various written and/or electronic forms of data and information (data, reports, etc.) relevant to land use planning. As appropriate, local governments will ensure that such materials are shared with land use planning staff within their individual jurisdictions as well as other jurisdictions within a particular watershed. Examples of relevant information, materials, or work products which may be shared periodically include grant proposals, restoration or BMP development projects, approvals for unique (such as projects approved with SUSMP waivers) or large development projects, monthly meeting notices, and information on various other activities such as mitigation or structural BMP efforts, educational activities, and grant proposals. Where appropriate, these governmental organizations will consider the development of standardized materials such as worksheets or letters for distribution throughout the watershed.

5. Collaborative Assessment. For watershed issues to be successfully integrated into the land use planning process, effective dialogue must be established between the various responsible parties. To this end, stormwater managers (e.g., staff with primary responsibility for completion and implementation of the WURMP) will establish forums as they determine necessary to ensure effective communication with planning staff both jurisdictionally and on a watershed basis. In both instances, the purpose of the meetings will be to facilitate the exchange of pertinent watershed-specific information and to explore the collaborative development of planning strategies between stormwater managers and planners. With respect to watershed-level meetings, local government will facilitate meetings attended by representatives from each jurisdiction in the watershed, other interested agencies, and the public. Public participation will be a priority during these and other meetings. The meetings will provide a general forum for discussions regarding projects that may impact water quality within other watershed jurisdictions, as well as collaborative opportunities for grant fund applications, coordination of natural resource planning, and mitigation within watersheds. Watershed land-use planning groups will periodically evaluate the effectiveness of these and other mechanisms of collaborative land-use planning to enhance their effectiveness.

6. Other Mechanisms. In addition to the general mechanisms described above, stakeholders will continue to identify and consider the use of a variety of other activities or practices to encourage collaborative land use planning. These include the following:

- a. Establishment of a system to provide public notification of pertinent information (i.e., proposed development proposals, proposed land use changes) to the members of a watershed-specific master contact list.
- b. Identification of water quality-related land use planning goals, objectives, and policies in the Watershed Urban Runoff Management Programs to guide long-range and current planning decisions.
- c. Amendment of existing ordinances and/or establishment of incentives to ensure that land mitigation required for proposed impacts associated with a development project (already required as part of the California Environmental Quality Act review process) occur within the limits of the affected watershed.

d. Inclusion of watershed jurisdictions in public notices for general plan amendments and/or updates. Through this inter-jurisdictional participatory process, stakeholders would have the opportunity to review and consider amendments and/or updates to general plans (or any specific elements) and/or zoning code in relation to the applicable Watershed Urban Runoff Management Program.

e. Support, encouragement, and, where appropriate, participation in, community based and inter-agency environmental research, inventory, protection and monitoring projects such as watershed planning initiatives and private land stewardship.

f. Distribution of Water Quality Technical Reports (as defined under the *Model Standard Urban Storm Water Mitigation Plan for San Diego County, Port of San Diego, and Cities in San Diego County*) for public review by all watershed jurisdictions. Through this inter-jurisdictional participatory process, stakeholders are encouraged to review and consider development proposals in relation to the goals and objectives in the applicable Watershed Urban Runoff Management Program.

g. Identification of potential sites suitable for watershed habitat restoration and water quality enhancement within jurisdictions through the water quality problem identification process in the Watershed Urban Runoff Management Program, and use of the potential site list as a tool for conditioning appropriate projects.

2. Growth Management Planning

a. Characterization of the relationship between current planning efforts and watershed planning

b. Recommendations to facilitate the incorporation of watershed planning in future planning efforts

3. Resource Management Planning

a. Wetlands

i. Characterization of the relationship between current planning efforts and watershed planning

ii. Recommendations to facilitate the incorporation of watershed planning in future planning efforts

b. Surface Mining

i. Characterization of the relationship between current planning efforts and watershed planning

ii. Recommendations to facilitate the incorporation of watershed planning in future planning efforts

c. Biological Resources

- i. Characterization of the relationship between current planning efforts and watershed planning**
- ii. Recommendations to facilitate the incorporation of watershed planning in future planning efforts**

B. Transportation Planning

- 1. Characterization of the relationship between current planning efforts and watershed planning**
- 2. Recommendations to facilitate the incorporation of watershed planning in future planning efforts**

C. Flood Control Planning

- 1. Characterization of the relationship between current planning efforts and watershed planning**
- 2. Recommendations to facilitate the incorporation of watershed planning in future planning efforts**

D. Water Supply and Water Quality Planning

- 1. Characterization of the relationship between current planning efforts and watershed planning**
- 2. Recommendations to facilitate the incorporation of watershed planning in future planning efforts**

E. Air Quality Planning

Air quality planning is a complex federal, state, and local undertaking, with no individual agency having regulatory authority over all sources of air pollution. The two primary statutes governing air quality regulation in California are the federal Clean Air Act as amended in 1990, and the California Health and Safety Code (Division 26, California Air Pollution Control Laws). Pursuant to the federal Act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates certain interstate sources of air pollution, such as ships, trains, and planes; develops recommended control techniques for use by states; and sets minimum air pollution regulatory program requirements to which states must adhere. Federal law does not dictate the governance structure for meeting these requirements, instead leaving it to states to designate the responsible entities.

Under state law, the responsibility to regulate air quality in California is divided between the state Air Resources Board (ARB) and 35 local air districts, including the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (APCD). ARB is responsible for controlling mobile sources (on- and off-road vehicles) and consumer products (such as household, personal care, and automotive service products). The APCD has primary responsibility for controlling air pollution from non-vehicular (stationary) sources in San Diego County, such as factories, power plants, gas stations, dry cleaners, landfills, stationary internal combustion engines, solvents, and coatings.

APCDs that have not attained federal or state ambient air quality standards for a particular air pollutant are responsible for developing air pollution control plans to achieve that standard. These plans incorporate federal, state, and local measures to meet legal requirements. Accordingly, while legal authority to control different pollution sources is separated, local districts are responsible for aggregating these measures into a plan to achieve standards and meet related federal and state program requirements.

To this end, the APCD has developed the San Diego portion of the State Implementation Plan (SIP) to address national ambient air standards and the San Diego Regional Air Quality Strategy (RAQS) to facilitate consistency with state standards. The stationary source control measures contained in the SIP and RAQS are developed by the APCD into regulations through a formal rulemaking process. Rules are developed to set limits on the amount of air contaminant emissions from various types of sources and/or by requiring specific control technologies. Following rule adoption, a permit system is used to impose requirements on stationary sources and to ensure compliance with regulations by prescribing very specific operating conditions or equipment for individual sources.

The APCD conducts continuous air quality surveillance through 10 monitoring stations strategically placed around the County. This continuous monitoring and rigorous implementation of the SIP and RAQS have resulted in substantial air quality improvement in San Diego County, despite growth in population, employment, and motor vehicle travel. In addition to monitoring carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, particulate matter, and ozone, one of the monitoring stations in San Diego County also evaluates wet and dry atmospheric deposition. Atmospheric, or aerial, deposition has been recognized as a potentially significant non-point source of water pollution (Baker 1997). Specifically, wet deposition contributes chemicals and nutrients to surfaces through precipitation events and fog or mist, while dry deposition is the portion of pollutants, such as particles or gases, directly deposited onto dry surfaces (see **Figure ...**).

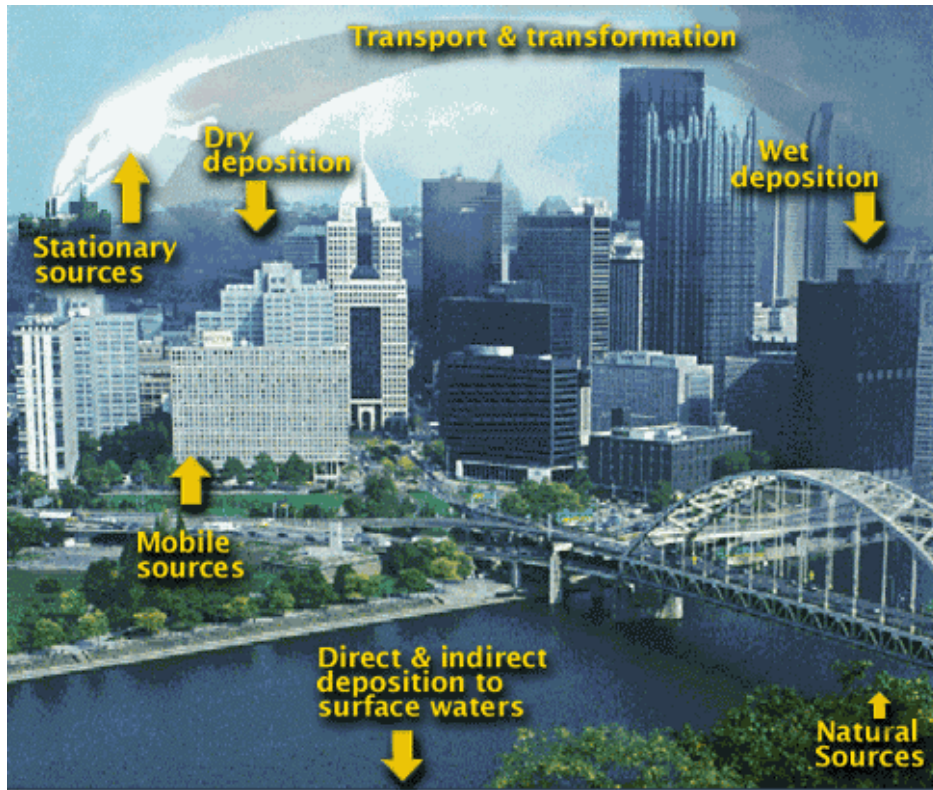


Figure Process of atmospheric deposition.
(<http://www.epa.gov/castnet/deposition.html>)

1. Characterization of the relationship between current air quality planning efforts and watershed planning

The efforts of the Air Pollution Control District (APCD) are the core of air quality planning in San Diego County. Through regional monitoring, the APCD quantifies the accumulation of air pollutants resulting from natural, stationary, area, and mobile sources; however, they only have the authority to regulate stationary sources. This thorough and continuous (24-hours per day) monitoring provides a comprehensive view of the region's air quality.

The APCD directly measures wet and dry atmospheric deposition at its Escondido monitoring station. Additionally, deposition may be indirectly quantified by multiplying a measured atmospheric concentration by a theoretical deposition velocity (Stolzenbach et al., 2001). This quantification of accumulated atmospheric pollutants is important to determine the ultimate impact on water quality. Specifically, pollutants accumulated from dry aerial deposition may be washed off into receiving waters during subsequent precipitation events. The resulting runoff may also include wet deposition pollutants contributed during the precipitation event itself.

While atmospheric deposition is an important link between air quality and water quality, the planning efforts for these areas differ dramatically. Air quality planning for both stationary and mobile sources relies heavily on the quantification of pollutants and is regional in nature, while monitoring programs and the governance structure for water quality planning is less comprehensive. Recent water quality permits require jurisdictions to develop collaborative monitoring programs and watershed-based

management programs, but these programs still lack the all-inclusive regulatory framework that made air quality planning efforts extremely effective.

2. Recommendations to facilitate the incorporation of watershed planning in future planning efforts

Recent air quality planning efforts have been tremendously successful; resulting in attainment of the federal ozone standard in 2001, and an 80 percent reduction since 1990 in the number of days exceeding the state ozone standard, among other significant air quality improvements. There is currently no direct link between these planning efforts and watershed planning; however, the regional governance structure and real-time continuous (24 hours per day) monitoring established by air quality planning strategies may serve as a valuable model for future watershed planning efforts.

Watershed planning will become more comprehensive as Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) programs are developed and implemented for waterbodies placed on the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list of impaired waters. A TMDL is the maximum amount of a particular pollutant that the waterbody can receive and still achieve the water quality standard for beneficial uses. These programs require the responsible parties to allocate pollutant reductions among the known sources in the watershed, which may include atmospheric sources. Several existing or proposed Clean Water Act Section 303(d)-listed waterbodies in San Diego County may be influenced by aerial inputs. Therefore, additional wet and dry deposition monitoring data may be useful to watershed planners as TMDL programs are developed and the link between air quality and water quality is further characterized.

Appendices

Appendix A. References

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Appendix B. Resources

Land Use Resources:

Growth Management Resources:

Conservation Management Resources:

Transportation Resources:

Flood Control Resources:

Water Supply and Water Quality Resources:

Air Quality Resources:

- San Diego County Air Pollution Control District: <http://www.sdapcd.co.san-diego.ca.us/>
- United States Environmental Protection Agency Clean Air Status and Trends Network (CASTNET): <http://www.epa.gov/castnet/>
- California Air Resources Board: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/homepage.htm>

General Resources:

- The Watershed Management Council: <http://www.watershed.org>
- Project Clean Water: www.projectcleanwater.org
 - Comprehensive Planning Technical Advisory Committee: http://www.projectcleanwater.org/html/tac_planning.html
 - Phase I Results Report: http://www.projectcleanwater.org/html/phase_1_report.html
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Appendix C. Glossary of Terms
