

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Large Rivers and Assessment Responsibilities under the Clean Water Act

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Large river systems in North America have been modified and managed to serve national interests since European settlement. These modifications to floodplain and channel habitats have resulted in habitat and species losses, water quality degradation and alterations to the hydraulic regime which the federal government has only recently begun to address and mitigate. Similarly, Federal management of these highly-modified river systems to serve the nation's economic needs has furthered ecological degradation and hindered recovery efforts. In response, states have historically regarded the management of these modified large, interstate rivers as primarily a federal responsibility. In terms of meeting their responsibilities under the Clean Water Act, states have strongly urged EPA to provide federal leadership in both the assessment and restoration of water quality for these rivers. EPA has begun efforts to coordinate with the states the functions and responsibilities assigned to them under the CWA as they apply to these interstate rivers. This effort requires a balance between EPA's interests in national consistency and the states' interests in state flexibility. Regardless of the outcome of these efforts, the need to characterize and manage the water quality of the large rivers continues to lag behind other federal and state efforts to restore lost habitat and endangered species. This abstract does not necessarily reflect EPA Policy.

Bill Franz coordinates water quality efforts and activities within the Upper Mississippi River Basin for EPA's Regional Office in Chicago. He has worked for EPA for 33 years with experience in the environmental impact review program and EPA's ecosystem efforts, as well as his current duties related to water quality and wetland restoration, protection and enhancement efforts.

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