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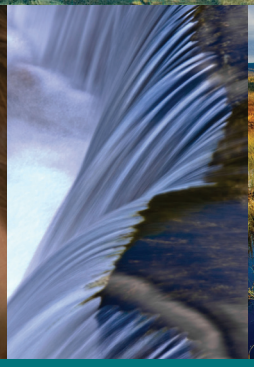
EPA

Office of Water

National Water Program

Best Practices and End of Year Performance Report —Executive Summary

Fiscal Year 2013



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National Water Program FY 2013 Performance Results

Executive Summary

Overview

EPA met **69%** of its commitments for all National Water Program performance measures in FY 2013. About **29%** were not met; for **2.3%**, either not enough data were available to assess progress or no reporting was expected by the end of the fiscal year. The FY 2013 results represented a decrease in the number of measures met from the previous year's results (80%). Other overarching highlights include:

- The national core drinking water and water quality programs were more successful than the geographic-based aquatic programs in meeting their commitments in 2013 **(71% vs. 65%)**. This was the reverse of the previous year's results, where 76% of the core program measures met their annual commitments compared to 87% of the geographic-based programs.
- Programs under the Mexico Border, Chesapeake Bay, Wetlands, and Great Lakes subobjectives were most successful in meeting their commitments.
- On average, **79%** of performance commitments set by the EPA regional offices were met in 2013, while **20%** of commitments were missed. This was a noticeable decline over the previous year's results of 87% met.

Protect Public Health

EPA met **71%** of its commitments for all drinking water measures in FY 2013. Of these:

- Approximately **92%** of the population was served by community water systems (CWSs) with drinking water that met all applicable health-based drinking water standards (commitment 92%).
- Ninety-one percent **(91%)** of the cumulative amount of Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (DWSRFs) available had loan agreements in place (commitment 89%). EPA has met its commitments for this measure six years in a row.

EPA did not meet **23%** of its drinking water commitments in FY 2013. A key challenge confronted by EPA and states:

- Approximately **93%** of community systems received sanitary surveys last year, falling short of the Agency's stretch goal of 95%.

For coastal and Great Lakes beaches monitored by state-based beach safety programs, EPA is reporting that **96%** of days of the beach season were open and safe for swimming (FY 2013 commitment 95%). EPA has consistently met this commitment over the past six years.

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Restore and Improve Fresh Waters, Coastal Waters, and Wetlands

EPA met **67%** of its commitments under the Water Quality subobjective in FY 2013 and fell short on **30%**; data were not available for **3%**. The percentage of commitments met declined in FY 2013 over the FY 2012 results (79%). Performance highlights include:

- **3,679** of the waters listed as impaired in 2002 met water quality standards for all the identified impairments in FY 2013 (commitment 3,608). Of a universe of 39,503 waterbodies, 9.3% were attaining water quality standards by the end of FY 2013.
- For the sixth consecutive year, EPA and states achieved the national goal of having current National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits in place for **89.7%** of non-tribal facilities (FY 2013 commitment 88%). EPA and authorized states fell short, however, in meeting the annual national commitment for issuing high-priority permits.
- EPA and states made significant gains in documenting the full or partial restoration of waterbodies that are impaired primarily by nonpoint sources. Nationally, EPA exceeded its commitment (468), with **504** waterbodies that were partially or fully restored.
- The Clean Water SRF utilization rate reached **97%** in 2013. Of the $105.1 billion in funds available for projects through 2013, $100 billion have been committed to 33,325 loans. Project assistance reached $4.6 billion, which funded 1,477 loans in a single year.

EPA faced several management challenges in restoring and improving freshwater quality in FY 2013. These include:

- For the first time in five years, states and territories did not meet the national commitment for submitting new or revised water quality criteria acceptable to EPA that reflect new scientific information (**32** vs. 36 states/territories).
- EPA approved **82%** of water quality standard revisions submitted by states and territories which for the first time in six years fell below the national commitment (87%)

The 28 National Estuary Programs (NEPs) and their partners protected or restored almost **127,000 acres** of habitat within the NEP study areas—27,000 acres above the goal of 100,000 acres. The 28 NEPs played the primary role in directing $1.3 billion in additional funds toward Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan implementation (leveraged from approximately $21 million in EPA Section 320 and earmark funds).This represents a **ratio of $39 raised for every $1** provided by EPA, which exceeds the historic ratio of $15 to $1 measured over the 2003–2012 period.

EPA, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, states, and tribes, was able to report **"no net loss"** of wetlands under the Clean Water Act Section 404 regulatory program. More than **207,000 acres** have been restored and enhanced since 2002. As of FY 2013, **37 states and tribes** have built capacities in wetlands monitoring, regulation, restoration, water quality standards, mitigation compliance, and partnership building.

Improve Drinking Water and Water Quality on American Indian Lands

Safe drinking water and water quality on tribal lands continues to be a concern for the water program. Some key highlights and challenges include:

- **Seventy-seven percent (77%)** of the population in Indian Country was served by CWSs that receive drinking water meeting all applicable health-based standards. EPA failed to achieve its national stretch goal of 87% in FY 2013.
- EPA, in coordination with other federal agencies, provided **119,000** American Indian and Alaska Native **homes** with access to safe drinking water and almost **70,000 homes** with access to basic sanitation.

Improve the Health of Large Aquatic Ecosystems

EPA implements collaborative programs with other federal agencies, states, and local communities to improve the health of large aquatic ecosystems (LAEs). The following are highlights and challenges for each LAE or place-based program with performance measures in the National Water Program Guidance:

- **U.S.–Mexico Border.** Infrastructure construction project completions through FY 2013 resulted in the removal of **128 million pounds** of biochemical oxygen demand loadings annually from the U.S.–Mexico border area, slightly more than its commitment of 127 million pounds. EPA provided access to safe drinking water for

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3,400 additional homes along the U.S.–Mexico border, which was above the annual goal of 3,000 additional homes. EPA provided adequate wastewater sanitation to an **additional 25,695 homes** over the past year, which was above the FY 2013 goal of 24,000 additional homes.

- **U.S. Pacific Island Waters.** Last year, **81% of the population** in the U.S. Pacific Island Territories was served by community drinking water systems that meet all applicable health-based drinking water standards throughout the year, compared with the commitment of 82%.
- **Great Lakes.** EPA worked with other federal and state agencies to protect, restore, and enhance more than **83,700** acres of wetlands and wetland-associated uplands across the Great Lakes Basin. This was well above the FY 2013 commitment of 68,000 acres. EPA, states, and other partners remediated a cumulative 1**1.5 million cubic yards** of contaminated sediments through 2012, including more than 1.8 million cubic yards in FY 2012.
- **Chesapeake Bay.** The Chesapeake Bay Program reported **48,100 acres** of submerged aquatic vegetation in the bay. This represents approximately **26%** of the program's long-term goal of 185,000 acres, which is the amount necessary to achieve Chesapeake Bay water quality standards. EPA expects enhanced implementation of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution control measures as a result of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) that was established in December 2010.
- **Gulf of Mexico.** The size of the hypoxic, or "dead," zone[1] in the Gulf of Mexico increased significantly from 2,889 to **5,838 square miles** at the end of FY 2013. A number of hydrological, climate, and monitoring factors impact the hypoxic zone from year to year. For the first time in six years, the Gulf of Mexico Program ended the year slightly below its FY 2013 cumulative target to restore, protect, or enhance 30,600 acres of coastal and marine habitats. Previously funded projects resulted in 57.36 acres for a cumulative 30,306 acres.
- **Long Island Sound.** Due to the impacts of Superstorm Sandy in 2012, the Long Island Sound Program fell short of its commitment (420 acres) by restoring or protecting **336 acres** of coastal habitat, including tidal wetlands, dunes, riparian buffers, and freshwater wetlands. The size of the hypoxic zone in Long Island Sound decreased from 289 to **80 square miles**, which was below the five-year rolling average of 154 square miles.
- **South Florida.** The health and functionality of the sea grass beds in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) were maintained above 2006 baseline levels in 2013. Water quality of the near shore and coastal waters of the FKNMS showed some improvement in 2013, with positive results for chlorophyll a, light clarity, and total phosphorus. Elevated dissolved inorganic nitrogen levels due to polluted runoff into waterways, however, continue to be a subject of concern.
- **Puget Sound Basin.** More than **30,000 acres** of tidally and seasonally influenced estuarine wetlands have been restored in the Puget Sound Basin since FY 2006. The program fell short of its 2013 goal (31,818 acres) due to a delay in the anticipated restoration in a key habitat. The Puget Sound program improved water quality and lifted harvest restrictions for 714 additional acres (**cumulative total of 3,203**) of shellfish bed growing areas. Unfortunately, this was far short of the program's cumulative goal of 7,758 acres of unrestrictive commercial and recreational harvesting area in the Sound.
- **Columbia River Basin.** The Columbia River Program has cleaned up a total of **79 acres** of contaminated sediment in the Lower Columbia River in as of FY 2013. These cleanups provide a significant contribution to reducing toxics in the Columbia River. EPA measured a **95%** reduction in contaminants of concern in the water and fish at several key sites on the Columbia River.

[1] The dead zone is an area of oxygen-starved water, also known as hypoxia. It is fueled by nitrogen and phosphorus runoff, principally from agricultural activity in the Mississippi River watershed, which stimulates an overgrowth of algae that sinks, decomposes, and consumes most of the life-giving oxygen supply in the water.