EPA

Office of Water

National Water Program

Best Practices and End of Year Performance Report—Executive Summary

Fiscal Year 2012

April 2013

National Water Program FY 2012 Performance Results

Executive Summary

Overview

EPA met 78% of its commitments for all National Water Program performance measures in FY 2012. Approximately 17% were not met, and 5.2% either did not have enough data available to assess progress or no reporting was expected by the end of the fiscal year. The FY 2012 results represented an increase in the number of measures met from the previous year's results (69%). Other overarching highlights include:

- The geographic-based aquatic programs were more successful than the national core drinking water and water quality water programs in meeting their commitments in 2012 (87% vs. 72%). This was the reverse of the previous year's results, where 77% of the core program measures met their annual commitments compared to 57% of the geographic-based programs.
- The Mexico Border, Coastal and Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, Fish and Shellfish, Chesapeake Bay, Long Island Sound, and Pacific Island subobjectives were most successful in meeting their commitments.
- On average, 87% of performance commitments set by the EPA regional offices were met in 2012, while 12% of commitments were missed. This was a noticeable improvement over the previous year's results of 83% met.

Protect Public Health

EPA met 62% of its commitments for all drinking water measures in 2012. Of these:

- Approximately 95% of the population was served by community water systems (CWSs) with drinking water that met all applicable health-based drinking water standards (commitment 91%).
- 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 38% of its drinking water commitments in 2012. Challenges confronted by EPA and states include:

- Eighty-nine percent (89%) of community systems received a sanitary survey last year, falling short of the Agency's stretch goal of 95%.
- Eighty-five percent (85%) of Class I, II, and III underground injection wells maintained their mechanical integrity, thereby reducing the impact of contaminants on underground sources of drinking water. This was below the annual goal of 90%.

For coastal and Great Lakes beaches monitored by state-based beach safety programs, EPA is reporting that 95% of days of the beach season were open and safe for swimming (FY 2012 commitment 95%). EPA has consistently met this commitment over the past six years.

Restore and Improve Fresh Waters, Coastal Waters, and Wetlands

EPA met 72% of its commitments under the Water Quality subobjective in FY 2012 and fell short on 15%; data were not available for 12%. The percentage of commitments met declined in FY 2012 over the FY 2011 results (77%). Performance highlights include:

- More than 3,500 of the waters listed as impaired in 2002 met water quality standards for all the identified impairments in FY 2012 (commitment 3,324). Of a universe of 39,503 waterbodies, 9% were attaining water quality standards by the end of FY 2012.
- For the fourth consecutive year, states and territories met regional commitments for submitting new or revised water quality criteria acceptable to EPA that reflect new scientific information.
- EPA approved 89% of water quality standard revisions submitted by states and territories (FY 2012 national commitment 85%).
- 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 90% of non-tribal facilities (FY 2012 commitment 88%). In addition, EPA and authorized states have exceeded their annual commitments for issuing high-priority permits for the past six years.
- 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 (394), with 433 waterbodies that were partially or fully restored.
- The Clean Water SRF utilization rate reached 98% in 2012. Of the $97.4 billion in funds available for projects through 2012, $95.4 billion have been committed to nearly 32,000 loans. In 2012, project assistance reached $5.8 billion, which funded 1,947 loans in a single year.

EPA faced several management challenges in restoring and improving freshwater quality in FY 2012. These include:

- EPA did not meet its commitment for state and territories supplying performance milestones to EPA on the development, proposal, and adoption of numeric water quality standards for total nitrogen and phosphorus. Many states have not provided complete information due to the scientific, programmatic, and policy complexities of developing nitrogen and phosphorus criteria.

The 28 National Estuary Programs (NEPs) and their partners protected or restored almost 115,000 acres of habitat within the NEP study areas—15,000 acres above the goal of 100,000 acres. The 28 NEPs played the primary role in directing $324 million in additional funds toward Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) implementation (leveraged from approximately $22 million in EPA Section 320 and earmark funds).This represents a ratio of $15 raised for every $1 provided by EPA, which matches the historic ratio measures 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 180,000 acres have been restored and enhanced since 2002. As of FY 2012, 44 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:

- EPA failed to achieve its national stretch goal of 87% of the population in Indian Country served by CWSs that receive drinking water meeting all applicable health-based standards (84% in FY 2012). This challenge is especially important considering that 93% of the population in Indian Country is served by small systems.
- EPA, in coordination with other federal agencies, fell just short of reaching its annual commitment of providing 110,000 American Indian and Alaska Native homes with access to safe drinking water.
- EPA, in coordination with other federal agencies, provided access to basic sanitation to over 63,000 American and Alaskan Native homes, exceeding the FY 2012 commitment.

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. The following are highlights and challenges for each Large Aquatic Ecosystem or place-based program with performance measures in the National Water Program Guidance:

- **U.S.–Mexico Border.** Infrastructure construction project completions through FY 2012 resulted in the removal of 119 million pounds of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) loadings annually from the U.S.–Mexico border area, slightly more than its commitment of 115.2 million pounds. EPA provided access to safe drinking water for 5,135 additional homes along the U.S.–Mexico border, which was above the annual goal of 1,000 additional homes. EPA provided adequate wastewater sanitation to an additional 31,000 homes over the past year, which was well above the FY 2012 goal of 10,500 additional homes.
- **U.S. Pacific Island Waters.** Last year, 80% 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. Sixty-four percent (64%) of sewage treatment plants in the U.S. Pacific Island Territories complied with permit limits for BOD and total suspended solids (TSS). This was above the previous year's result of 50%.
- **Great Lakes.** Average long-term total PCB concentrations in whole Great Lakes top predator fish at sites on each Great Lake declined 43% between 2000 and 2009, meeting the target for declines in concentration trends. EPA, states, and other partners remediated a cumulative 9.7 million cubic yards of contaminated sediments through 2011, including more than 1.3 million cubic yards in FY 2011.
- **Chesapeake Bay.** The Chesapeake Bay Program reported 63,074 acres of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) in the bay. This represents approximately 34% 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.** With the support of numerous federal, state, local, and private partners, EPA has restored water and habitat quality to 316 impaired waterbodies in 13 priority coastal areas of the Gulf of Mexico since 2007. This exceeded the 2012 goal of 290 impaired waterbodies. The size of the hypoxic, or "dead," zone in the Gulf of Mexico decreased from 17,520 km2 in FY 2011 to 7,483 km2 at the end of FY 2012. A number of hydrological, climate, and monitoring factors impact the hypoxic zone from year to year.
- **Long Island Sound.** The Long Island Sound Program significantly exceeded its 2012 commitment (218 acres) by restoring or protecting 537 acres of coastal habitat, including tidal wetlands, dunes, riparian buffers, and freshwater wetlands. The size of the hypoxic zone in Long Island Sound increased from 130 to 289 square miles, which was above the five-year rolling average.
- **South Florida.** The health and functionality of the sea grass beds in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) were not maintained in 2012. The Agency did not meet the water quality measure of 10 ppb of total phosphorus in the Everglades ecosystem. However, progress is being made in determining the necessary next steps toward restoring water quality.
- **Puget Sound Basin.** More than 23,000 acres of tidally and seasonally influenced estuarine wetlands have been restored in the Puget Sound Basin since FY 2006. The program significantly exceeded its 2012 goal due to a considerable number of habitat projects receiving funds over the past few years. The Puget Sound program improved water quality and lifted harvest restrictions for 964 additional acres of shellfish bed growing areas. Unfortunately, this was not enough to reach the program's cumulative goal of 3,878 acres of unrestrictive commercial and recreational harvesting area in the Sound.
- **Columbia River Basin.** The Columbia River Program cleaned up an additional 16 acres of contaminated sediment at the Zidell cleanup site in the Lower Columbia River in FY 2012. These cleanups provide a significant contribution to reducing toxics in the Columbia River. Due to limited finding, EPA was unable to complete its monitoring for contaminants of concern in fish and the water in the Columbia River.