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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF WATER

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Release of the *FY 2013 National Water Program Guidance*

FROM: Michael H. Shapiro *Michael Shapiro*
Deputy Assistant Administrator

TO: Office Directors, Office of Water
Regional Water Division Directors; Regions 1-10
Great Waterbody Program Office Directors
Large Aquatic Ecosystem Subobjective Managers

The final *FY 2013 National Water Program Guidance*, which defines environmental and public health goals and program strategies for the National Water Program for FY 2013, is now available on the internet at: http://water.epa.gov/resource_performance/planning/FY-2013-National-Water-Program-Guidance.cfm. Printed copies of the *Guidance* are available from the EPA Office of Water.

Priorities for the water program in FY 2013 are summarized in the Executive Summary and Introduction of the *Guidance*. These priorities are:

1. Sustainable Communities - Making Communities More Sustainable

- Making America's Water Systems Sustainable and Secure
- Safeguarding Public Health
- Restoring and Protecting Urban Waters

2. Healthy Watersheds - Restoring and Protecting America's Watersheds

- Focusing Efforts in Key Geographic Areas
- Strengthening Protections for Our Waters
- Improving Watershed-Based Approaches

Improvements have been made throughout the narrative and to measures as part of an on-going commitment to provide clear and meaningful guidance for achieving water goals. In this effort, we streamlined measures, reducing 20 measures from FY 2012. Other major changes to the *Guidance* are summarized in Appendix C.

For FY 2013, the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund grant guidance was included in the *Guidance* as part of the on-going effort to issue grant guidance more efficiently. Also, to recognize the importance of reducing nitrogen and phosphorus pollution in the Nation's waters, we are including a new nutrient measure (see WQ-26 in Appendix A and E) that is based on the nutrient framework elements articulated in the EPA policy memorandum issued by Acting Assistant Administrator Stoner on March 16, 2011^a.

The Agency planning process provides for the development of draft EPA regional and national commitments for FY 2013, based on the targets for measures identified in this *Guidance*, by July 6th. I strongly encourage EPA regional offices to do their best to develop realistic but ambitious commitments while reflecting the needs and priorities in each region. Final commitments will be negotiated over the summer and finalized by October 19th.

Once final commitments are in place, the National Water Program will monitor progress throughout FY 2013. The program evaluation "feedback loop" includes the following key elements:

- Reporting of progress toward environmental and public health goals and program commitments at the mid-year and at the end of the year, including identification of "best practices";
- Continued efforts to share program perspectives among regional and headquarters (HQ) program managers through HQ visits to regional offices; and
- Cooperation with the other offices, such as the Office of Management and Budget, EPA Inspector General, Government Accountability Office, and National Academy of Sciences, to consider conclusions of evaluation studies of water programs and adopt recommended "best practices" where appropriate.

If we can continue to reinforce a strong annual planning process with an equally effective performance assessment effort, the National Water Program will be well prepared to continue its strong performance in the years ahead.

Thank you for the outstanding work you have done to continue progress toward cleaner and safer water for the citizens of the United States. I look forward to working with you as we continue with this important mission.

cc: Nancy Stoner
Barbara J. Bennett

^a http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/standards/criteria/nutrients/upload/memo_nitrogen_framework.pdf