

Chapter 10

Ongoing Areawide Water Quality Management Planning

This chapter describes, in turn, NEFCO’s organizational structure for administering the areawide water quality management plan (208 Plan), its water quality planning functions, and agency policies for sustaining the ongoing planning process.

I. Organizational Structure of Areawide Management Planning

Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO)

Ultimate responsibility for 208 Plan administration in the NEFCO 208 Planning area is vested in the NEFCO General Policy Board which has been so designated by the Governor of Ohio. The NEFCO Board is comprised of 42 elected and public officials, and private appointees who represent the counties, cities, villages, townships and key regional agencies within the four-county area. The chief of the Ohio EPA’s Northeast Ohio District Office is a non-voting ex-officio member of the Board. Representation on the NEFCO General Policy Board is described in its Bylaws.

The Bylaws provides for the agency’s Environmental Resources Technical Advisory Committee (ERTAC) as a standing committee of the Board. The ERTAC was created with the following objectives:

- To serve as an information clearinghouse for environmental issues, proposed and final regulations, and grants.
- To serve as a forum for the discussion of regional environmental problems e.g. septage spreading, storm water management, and wetlands.
- To develop policies, actions and recommendations pertaining to the identified problems for General Policy Board consideration.
- To provide guidance to the NEFCO staff in the development and progress of products from its environmental work program, as well as technical reviews of completed products, which are then submitted to the NEFCO General Policy Board for consideration.

The composition of the ERTAC is described in the committee’s Bylaws. The committee membership includes representatives from the County Commissioners or County Executive, cities, county planning agencies, city and county health departments, sanitary engineers/ environmental service directors, the Ohio EPA central and regional offices, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and soil and water conservation districts.

II. Water Quality Planning Functions

The NEFCO Board provides many functions for water quality management planning. These functions are consistent with state and federal regulations and help to guide development of the organization's work program. As such, NEFCO:

- a) Maintains the Section 208 Continuing Planning Process for the planning area in cooperation with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and coordinates planning with adjacent regions sharing common watersheds.
- b) Serves as a regional policy forum for the identification, discussion and resolution of water quality management planning issues confronting local communities and "Designated Management Agencies" i.e., agencies designated to perform water quality management functions under the 208 Plan.
- c) Coordinates water quality information sharing among "Designated Management Agencies" and reports regional water quality trends and conditions.
- d) Assists "Designated Management Agencies" in planning and program development in cooperation with federal and state agencies. These plans and programs address public wastewater treatment, home sewage, package plants, storm water permits, nonpoint source management (such as storm water management and sediment control programs in urban areas and erosion control practices in rural areas), groundwater protection, wetlands, and other water quality strategies.
- e) Periodically updates plan elements addressing wastewater treatment management, home sewage, and nonpoint source controls.
- f) Plans and coordinates, in cooperation with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and "Designated Management Agencies" water quality management planning in watersheds subject to remedial action plans. RAPs are plans to restore and protect water quality required by the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.
- g) Conducts limited field investigations of water quality conditions in cooperation with Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and "Designated Management Agencies".
- h) Assists "Designated Management Agencies" in identifying funds to carry out water quality management needs.
- i) Seeks to build public awareness of water quality management issues through public education and communications, and
- j) Advocates the interests of the region, and NEFCO's members in particular, in support of water quality management goals for Northeast Ohio.

III. Ongoing Planning Policies for this Water Quality Management Plan Update

The following policies describe functions needed to administer and sustain the 208 Plan on a continuing basis. Staff and financial support will be needed to sustain ongoing planning activities. With the adoption of this plan update, the NEFCO General Policy Board affirms its intention to sustain this plan.

A. Wastewater Management Planning Support

Policy 10-1: The areawide planning agency will review applications for state revolving funds for wastewater treatment and advise the applicant agency and Ohio EPA on the consistency of such applications with the 208 Plan.

Policy 10-2: In consultation with Ohio EPA, the areawide planning agency will review permits to install for new or expanded wastewater treatment facilities for consistency with the 208 Plan.

Policy 10-3: The areawide planning agency will obtain review and comment through the Intergovernmental Review (IGR) process and forward results to appropriate agencies upon federal grant applications with potential water quality impacts.

Policy 10-4: The areawide planning agency will assist in the resolution of conflicts between management agencies concerning primacy for wastewater treatment management and facility planning. This would extend to conflicts between facility planning areas with respect to coordination of sewer planning. Means such as the following would be utilized:

- (a) serve as a third party, listening to all sides of a dispute concerning water quality management planning functions; and
- (b) establish an ad hoc fact-finding committee which would also recommend courses of action to appropriate officials.

Policy 10-5: The areawide planning agency will periodically update population projections and inventory land uses to guide ongoing facility planning efforts.

Policy 10-6: The areawide planning agency will maintain and update as necessary base maps of facility planning areas.

Policy 10-7: The areawide planning agency will consider new facility planning areas in response to requests from designated management agencies.

B. Management of Home Sewage Disposal Systems

Policy 10-8: The areawide planning agency will sponsor periodic forums of area local health departments to assess progress in plan implementation.

Policy 10-9: The areawide planning agency will provide planning support for the preparation of septage disposal management plans.

C. Nonpoint Source and Storm Water Management

Policy 10-10: The areawide planning agency will periodically review and update nonpoint source and storm water management model legislation.

D. Protection of Regionally Important Water Resources

Policy 10-11: The areawide planning agency will coordinate local proposals for assimilative capacity set asides.

Policy 10-12: The areawide planning agency will periodically review and update regionally important water resource listings.

Policy 10-13: The areawide planning agency will maintain and update as necessary base maps of regionally important resource areas.

E. Watershed Planning Groups

Policy 10-14: The areawide planning agency will support and assist in the coordination of watershed level planning activities.

F. Urban Streams Restoration Planning

Policy 10-15: The areawide planning agency will provide planning support for the urban streams restoration planning process, if funding is available.

G. Administrative Planning Support

Policy 10-16: The areawide planning agency will periodically assess and report to appropriate authorities financial needs for area water quality management and planning.

Policy 10-17: The areawide planning agency will maintain liaison with and provide limited technical assistance to other water quality related programs operating or with the potential to operate in the planning area.

Policy 10-18: The areawide planning agency will monitor progress in implementation of the plan and periodically report progress to the Ohio EPA.

Policy 10-19: The areawide planning agency will review and comment on proposed changes to water quality standards for area bodies of water.

Policy 10-20: The areawide planning agency will assist local governments and other local water quality management agencies in their efforts to implement recommendations of this plan.

Policy 10-21: The areawide planning agency will recommend certification or decertification of management agencies to the Ohio EPA.

Policy 10-22: If funding is available, the areawide planning agency will periodically update its 208 Plan and submit the Plan for certification by the State of Ohio

Policy 10-23: The areawide planning agency will provide an opportunity for public participation in plan development discussions.

Policy 10-24: The areawide planning agency will provide staff to coordinate plan administration activities.