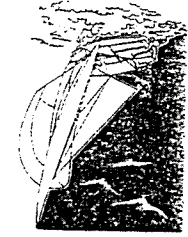


RAPS in Action:

How Remedial Action Plans are Implemented in New York State



RAPS



New York State Department
of Environmental Conservation



Mario M. Cuomo
Governor
Langdon Marsh
Commissioner

What You Can Do?

Informed and active citizens are an important part of any remedial action plan. Your support is a vital part of ensuring that RAP goals are met and that the Great Lakes watershed is preserved and protected for future generations. Here are some tips to help you get involved:

- Get to know your AOC. If you don't live in an AOC, find out which watershed you live in, (see map) it may be associated with an AOC. Be aware that what happens in your watershed can affect water quality in an AOC.
- Contact the RAP committee in your area (or NYSDEC) to get more information on an AOC or to find out what remedial actions are taking place. You might decide that there are environmental issues that you feel strongly about.
- Attend a RAP meeting.
- Write a letter to the editor or contact your local representatives with your concerns about an AOC or watershed.
- Get involved in a local waterfront cleanup project.
- Monitor successes and progress in your area.

No matter what level of involvement you choose, what you do in your watershed makes a difference.

For more information contact:

NYS DEC Division of Water
Public Participation Section
Albany, NY (518) 457-0669

development activities will reduce or prevent the discharge of pollution in stormwater. The NYS-DEC has developed a permit system to require point source controls for stormwater.

Pollution also occurs when storm and sanitary sewers are combined and wastewater collection systems and treatment plants are not equipped to treat the total flow. During heavy precipitation, a combination of sewage and stormwater can overflow into lakes and rivers, contributing to excessive nutrient and bacterial contamination. Actions to address these combined sewer overflow (CSO) problems include the construction of facilities that collect, store and treat wastewater during storms and into lakes during storms. In addition, the separation of stormwater and sanitary sewers to prevent overflowing to waterbodies during storms.

Restoring and Creating Habitat

Contaminants in water and the destruction of habitat reduce populations of fish and wildlife and degrade the overall health of a watershed. Destruction of habitat is often caused by excessive development in areas important to fish and wildlife. For example, destruction of wetlands can ruin nearshore fish spawning areas and migratory routes essential to the well-being of many birds and animals. In addition, toxics from hazardous waste sites or discharges can contaminate fish and wildlife; if consumed by humans these toxics may have a detrimental effect on human health. As a result, fish consumption advisories have been issued throughout the Great Lakes. These advisories provide information about what species are safe to eat, and in what quantities. The goal of any RAP is the restoration and/or creation of habitat and the elimination of toxic chemicals that adversely affect fish and wildlife.

Preventing Nonpoint Source Pollution

Nonpoint source pollution (NPS) includes runoff from construction, urban activities, farming and mining. It results from everyday land use and activities all around us. Over time, rain carries NPS pollutants (such as eroded soil containing excess nutrients, pesticides, fertilizers and solvents) into lakes and rivers. They can cloud drinking water, poison aquatic life and contaminate beaches. Best Management Practices (BMPs) are the tools used to reduce and eliminate NPS pollution. Just as there are many types and sources of NPS pollutants, there are many forms of BMPs. For example, keeping litter off streets prevents it from getting flushed into lakes during storms. In addition, the proper treatment, storage and disposal of wastes prevent future contamination and expensive and time consuming cleanup. The NYSDEC and the County Soil and Water Conservation Districts are working with County Water Quality Coordinating Committees to design water quality strategies to reduce NPS pollution in each county. Because there are so many potential sources, implementation of these strategies requires the cooperation of everyone, including you.

Improving the Control and Treatment of Stormwater

Land use changes resulting from construction and development activities have accelerated the runoff of pesticides, fertilizers and other potential contaminants that are applied to land. During storms, these contaminants are transported in stormwater runoff that enters stormwater or sanitary sewer collection systems and may enter waterways directly. As a result, these discharges can degrade the quality of streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and estuaries. Precautions taken during construction and