

CWA 303(d) Program Vision: Overview & Implications:

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WSWC – Fall Meeting
Scottsdale, AZ
October 9, 2014**

National 303(d) Vision (with an eye toward 2022)



- The CWA Section 303(d) program provides effective **integration** for implementation of activities to **restore and protect** the nation's aquatic resources, where the nation's waters have been **assessed**, restoration and protection objectives have been systematically **prioritized**, and TMDLs and **alternative** approaches are being **adaptively** implemented to achieve water quality goals with the **collaboration** of States, federal agencies, tribes, stakeholders, and the public.

What Vision Really Represents

- State-EPA Collaboration the way it was meant to be
- Product and Progress over Process and Pace
- Probability of Successful Implementation becomes Paramount in Setting Priorities
- Diversification of Restoration Approaches
- State Assumption of Long Range Priorities
- Do Less with Less but Do What's Most Important

303d Program: Building the Bridge between the Way Things Are and the Way They Should Be



**Environmental
Data & Goals**

303d Program

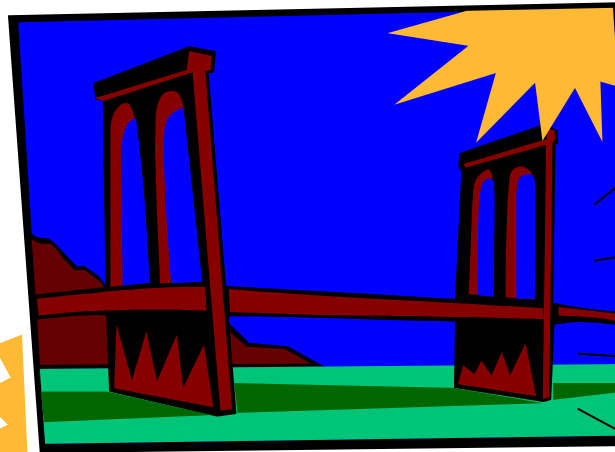
Implementation

Data

Criteria

Monitoring

Standards



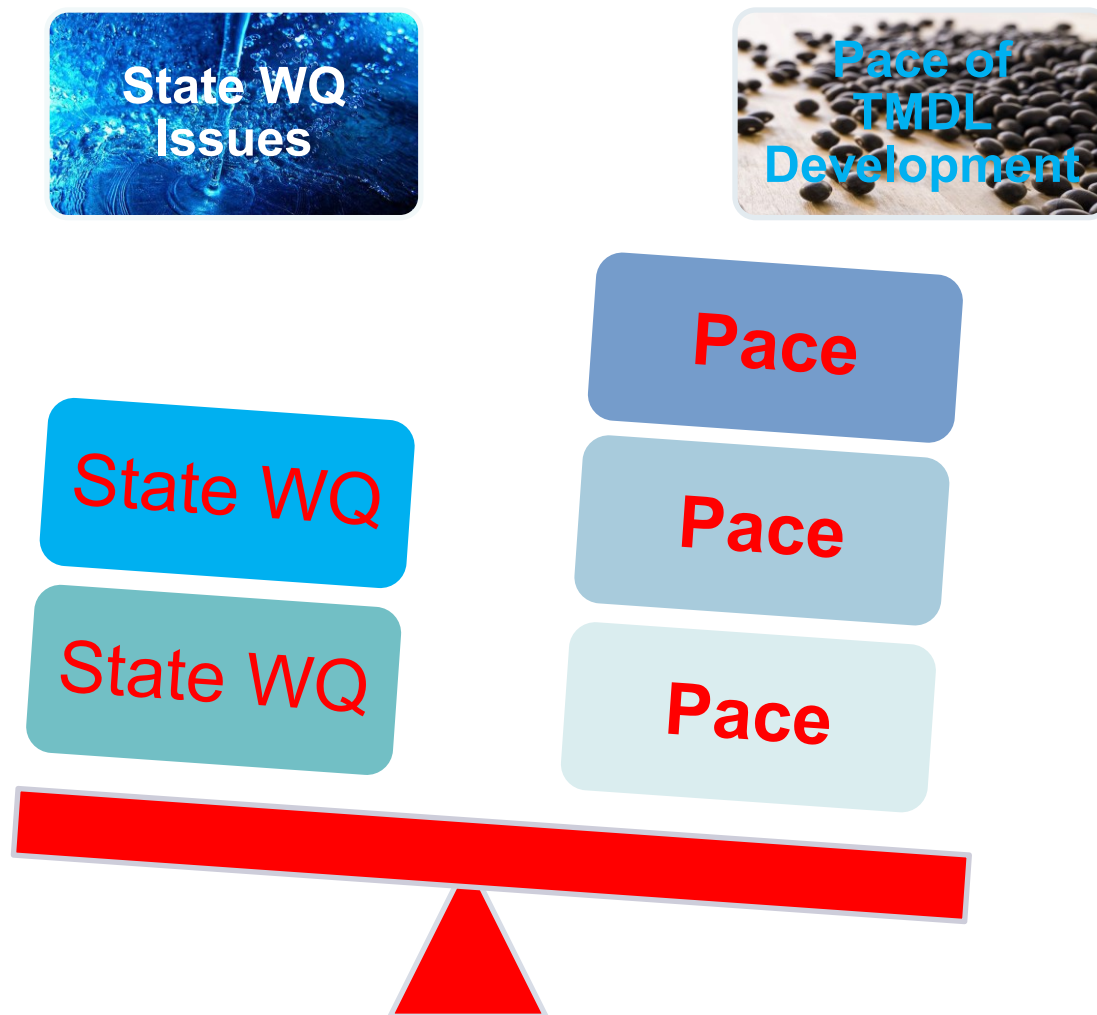
**Non-point
Source**

Permitting

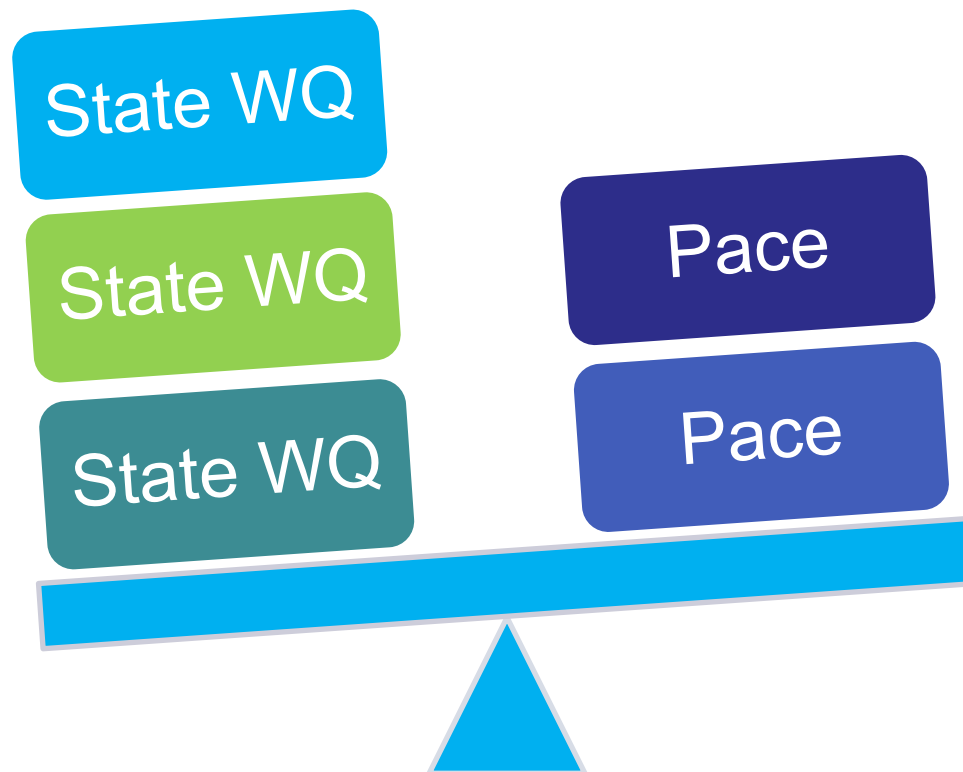
Remediation

**Resource
Management**

303(d): Where Its Head Has Been



303d: A Vision of Where It's Going



The Vision: An Opportunity

- Focus on State Water Quality Priorities
- Emphasize on Results: Restoration & Protection
- Provide Flexibility & Adaptability
- Extend the Planning Horizon
- Embrace Efficiencies while Recognizing Uncertainties
- A Better Way Without Changing CWA
- EPA has Bought In

303d Vision Components



303d Vision: Prioritization

- Many options for how to set priorities
 - Pollutant
 - Water body
 - Public or agency interest
 - Administrative
 - Implementation
 - Other

- **Key Concepts:**
 - **Have a plan**
 - **Be flexible to address changes over time**
 - **Reserve capacity**

Not a new concept, but a new focus

303d Vision: Alternatives

- Don't bring a keg to a cocktail party
- Potential options include:
 - Direct to Implementation
 - TMDL surrogates
 - Cooperative Agreements
 - NPDES (A New Vision?)

- **Key Concepts:**
 - Adaptive management
 - Flexibility
 - Accountability
 - TMDLs if other options don't work

**New Concept
(Moving Beyond 4B)**

303d Vision: Engagement

- Improve outreach, communication and involvement
 - State Environmental Agency
 - Other federal and state partners
 - Public
 - Stakeholders
 - Regulated Community

- **Key Concepts:**
 - Have a plan
 - Build partnerships
 - Improve reporting outcomes
 - Be receptive

**Not a new concept,
but a new focus**

303d Vision: Integration

- Engage implementation programs to achieve Water Quality Goals
 - TMDLs not self-implementing
 - Other federal and state partners
 - 319 / NPS Programs
 - Other CWA Programs
 - Federal & State Programs
 - Non-government interests

- **Key Concepts:**
 - **Build partnerships**
 - **Improve outcomes**
 - **Follow a project through till WQ restoration or protection is achieved**

Not a new concept, but a renewed collaborative effort

303d Vision: Assessment

- Vision priority projects to be supported by appropriate data and modeling
 - Assessment
 - TMDL or alternative development
 - Re-evaluation after implementation

- **Key Concepts:**
 - **Use data to support project from start to finish**

Not a new concept, but a more targeted mission

303d Vision: Protection

- Vision formally endorses actions centered on protection in addition to restoration
 - Implementation of Antidegradation Policy
 - Protection of non-impaired waters
 - Informational TMDLs

- **Key Concepts:**
 - Support CWA goals to restore and maintain
 - Prevent impairments
 - Consistent with watershed approach

**Not a new concept, but
a new focus if State
chooses to do so**

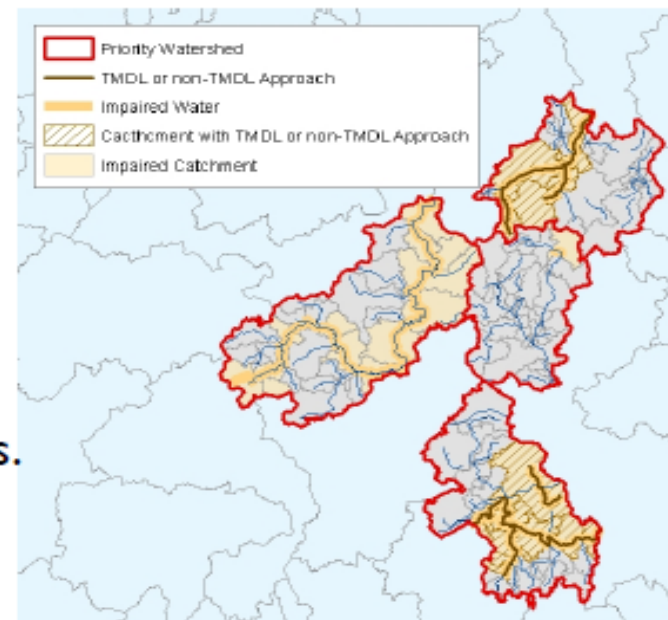
303d Vision: Recap



- A new framework applied to existing regulations
 - Allows for better focus on state's priorities
 - Makes 303(d) universe smaller and doable
 - Creates no new requirements but different angles
 - Provides new flexibilities and tools for an uncertain world
 - Extends timeframe to achieve goals, recognizes reality
 - Provides a set of guiding principles for customization
 - Identifies suggested milestones and timeline to integrate Vision approach into existing programs
 - Provides more value and accountability for States
 - Creates more purpose for 303(d)

New CWA 303(d) Metric (WQ-27)

Extent of priority areas identified by each State that are addressed by EPA-approved TMDLs or alternative restoration approaches for impaired waters that will achieve water quality standards. These areas may also include protection approaches for unimpaired waters to maintain water quality standards.



- Expressed as percentage of watershed area (by state and aggregated nationally).
- Priority areas are defined by each State in close coordination with the EPA Regions and the public.
- Alternative restoration approach is a plan and/or a set of actions pursued in near-term (other than a TMDL) that in their totality are designed to attain water quality standards.
- Protection approach is a plan and/or a set of actions pursued in the near-term that are designed to maintain or improve unimpaired waters in attaining water quality standards.
- Targets are set annually as well as long-term for 2022.