

## **Nonpoint Source Management Program**

Nonpoint source (NPS) water pollution, sometimes called runoff pollution or polluted runoff does not result from a discharge at a specific, single location (or point), but generally comes from diffuse, numerous sources. Runoff occurring after a rain event may transport sediment from plowed fields, construction sites, or logging operations, pesticides and fertilizers from farms and lawns, motor oil and grease deposited on roads and parking lots, or bacteria containing waste from agricultural animal facilities or malfunctioning septic systems. The rain moves the pollutants across the land to the nearest waterbody or storm drain where they may impact the water quality in creeks, rivers, lakes, estuaries, and wetlands. NPS pollution may also impact groundwater when it is allowed to seep or percolate into aquifers. Adverse effects of NPS pollution include physical destruction of aquatic habitat, fish kills, interference with or elimination of recreational uses of a waterbody (particularly lakes), closure of shellfish beds, reduced water supply or taste and odor problems in drinking water, and increased potential for flooding because waterbodies become choked with sediment.

Congress recognized the growing problem of nonpoint source pollution in the late 1980s, and added NPS provisions to the federal law. Section 319 of the 1987 Amendments to the Clean Water Act required states to assess the nonpoint source water pollution associated with surface and groundwater within their borders and then develop and implement a management strategy to control and abate the pollution. The first Assessment of Nonpoint Source Pollution in South Carolina accomplished this purpose. The Department's Bureau of Water manages the ongoing State NPS Management Program, which develops strategies and targets waterbodies for priority implementation of management projects. Section 319 funds various voluntary efforts, including watershed-based improvement projects, which address many aspects of the pollution prevention management measure and provide education, outreach and technical assistance to various groups and agencies. Most of the projects are implemented by cooperating agencies.

Many land activities can individually or cumulatively contribute to NPS pollution. Eight categories of NPS pollution sources have been identified as contributing to water quality degradation in South Carolina: agriculture, forestry, urban areas, marinas and recreational boating, mining, hydrologic modification, wetlands and riparian areas disturbance, land disposal, and groundwater contamination. There are programs in place, both regulatory and voluntary to address all eight categories.

### ***Agriculture***

In South Carolina, pesticides, fertilizers, animal waste, and sediment are potential sources of agricultural NPS pollution. Agricultural activities also have the potential to directly impact the habitat of aquatic species through physical disturbances caused by livestock or equipment, and through the management of water. The State has laws and regulations that prevent NPS pollution from several agricultural sources including pesticides and animal waste. Funding programs, including those under §319 grants from EPA such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), cost share funds from USDA and are used to implement best management practices that are not covered under regulations. Agriculture land acreage is quantified in the basin-wide and individual watershed evaluations.

## ***Silviculture***

Forests comprise a major portion of South Carolina's land base. As of 2009, 67% (12.9 million acres) of the State's total land area is in timberland. Silvicultural practices associated with road access, harvest, and regeneration of timber present the most significant potential for NPS pollution. Silvicultural activities have the potential to degrade the State's waters through the addition of sediment, nutrients, organics, elevated temperature, and pesticides. Erosion and subsequent sedimentation are the most significant and widespread NPS problems associated with forestry practices. Sudden removal of large quantities of vegetation through harvesting or silvicultural practices can also increase leaching of nutrients from the soil system into surface waters and groundwaters. Most water quality impacts from forestry are temporary or short-lived, can be minimized or mitigated when Best Management Practices (BMPs) are applied, and the site recovers within 2-3 years as vegetation is re-established.

Overall compliance with South Carolina's Best Management Practices for Forestry is 98.6% for timber harvesting operations. Programs to abate or control NPS pollution from forestry activities are primarily the responsibility of the S.C. Forestry Commission (SCFC) and the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USFS), with other agencies having supplementary programs. SCFC provides the results of courtesy exams of forestry operations monthly to both SCDHEC's Division of Water Quality and to forest industries. Impacts from silviculture can be significant if BMPs are not properly applied. If water quality was impacted by a forestry operation, SCDHEC may institute enforcement action under the South Carolina Pollution Control Act. The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) also provides technical assistance to government, landowners, and land users. Forest land acreage is quantified in the basin-wide and individual watershed evaluations.

## ***Urban Areas***

Urbanization has been linked to the degradation of urban waterways. The major pollutants found in runoff from urban areas include sediment, nutrients, oxygen-demanding substances, heavy metals, petroleum hydrocarbons, pathogenic bacteria, and viruses. Suspended sediments constitute the largest mass of pollutant loadings to receiving waters from urban areas. Construction sites are a major source of sediment erosion. Nutrient and bacterial sources of contamination include fertilizer and pesticide usage, pet wastes, leaves, grass clippings, and faulty septic tanks. Petroleum hydrocarbons result mostly from automobile sources. From 2000 to 2010, statewide population growth in South Carolina increased by 15.3 percent. This continuing development and population growth has the potential to make urban runoff the most significant source of pollution in waters of the State in the future, particularly in South Carolina's coastal communities. During the same time period, Horry County experienced a 37 percent increase in population growth. Urban land acreage is quantified in the basin-wide and individual watershed evaluations.

SCDHEC has a number of statewide programs that address components of urban NPS pollution. The Bureau of Water administers four permitting programs that control runoff from new and existing urban sources. These include the Stormwater and Sediment Reduction program, Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4), Industrial NPDES Stormwater Permits, and the §401 water quality certification program (see p.28). Additional controls for urban runoff in the coastal zone are implemented by SCDHEC's Oceans and Coastal Resources Management (OCRM) through the State Coastal Zone Management Plan.

SCDHEC's Bureau of Environmental Health's Division of Onsite Wastewater Management administers the Onsite Sewage Disposal System program for the entire State, and oversees the permitting for the installation and management of septic systems. Although not associated with urban land use, this Division permits the septic systems of camping facilities if the facility is not on public sewer. The camp sewage is discharged into a public collection, treatment and disposal system if available, or an onsite wastewater treatment and disposal system (septic tank) is used.

### ***Marinas and Recreational Boating***

As with any human activity, marinas and associated recreational boating activities have the potential to impact the natural environment. Marine sanitation devices and illicit discharges can be sources of bacteria and oxygen demanding substances. Antifouling paints, exhausts, and maintenance activities can be sources of toxic metals, hydrocarbons, and other pollutants. Construction and maintenance activities, such as dredging, can negatively impact aquatic habitats and ecosystems. The physical characteristics of marinas (basin versus open water, high tidal flushing versus low or no tidal flushing, etc.) have the potential to impact water quality. To ensure that impacts associated with existing and proposed marinas are minimized to the greatest extent possible, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the SCDHEC are responsible for permitting marinas in South Carolina. Within SCDHEC, the two offices that have marina permitting authority are the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (SCDHEC OCRM) and the Office of Environmental Quality Control (SCDHEC Bureau of Water). SCDHEC OCRM issues critical area permits for marinas within the critical area of the coastal zone. SCDHEC Bureau of Water issues permits for marinas at all other locations within the State and issues §401 Water Quality Certifications for marinas statewide. The U.S. Coast Guard and the S.C. Department of Natural Resources are responsible for managing recreational boating activity.

### ***Mining***

South Carolina's mineral production consists of non-fuel minerals that provide raw materials for construction products and a precious metal industry. Portland cement clays (kaolin and brick), sand and gravel, and crushed stone represent the majority of the total mineral value. As of June 30, 2013 there were 616 permitted mining operations in South Carolina totaling 84294.2 acres (includes acreage for excavation, buffer, and mine reserves). There were 655 acres of mine land reclaimed during the past fiscal year, which brings the cumulative total of mine land reclaimed since the beginning of the mining and reclamation program to acres.

Surface mining has the potential to generate NPS pollution during mineral exploration, mine development extraction, transportation, mining and processing, product storage, waste disposal, or reclamation. Potential nonpoint source impacts related to mining activities generally include hydrologic modification, erosion and sedimentation, water quality deterioration, fish and wildlife disturbances, and public nuisances. The Department's Bureau of Land and Waste Management has primary regulatory responsibility for mining activities. Within the Bureau, the Division of Mining and Solid Waste Permitting is responsible for administering and implementing the S.C. Mining Act and its associated regulations. The Mining Act serves as part of an overall management plan for NPS pollution from active mines. Mining activities and locations are identified in the appropriate watershed evaluations.

## ***Hydromodification***

Hydrologic modification (or hydromodification) is defined as stream channelization, channel modification, and dam construction. These activities can negatively impact water quality, destroy or modify instream habitat and increase streambank and shoreline erosion. Two State permits, implemented by the SCDHEC, are involved in the implementation of management measures for hydromodification. A critical area permit is required for coastal waters, saltwater wetlands, and beaches defined as critical areas. A navigable waters permit is required for the remainder of the State. Implementation of State policy for dam construction is similar to control of other hydromodification projects in South Carolina, requiring the same State permits and certifications. In addition, dams require a State dam safety permit or a State stormwater management and sediment reduction permit. The Department must also issue Water Quality Certifications pursuant to §401 of the Federal Clean Water Act for dam construction and hydropower operations licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

## ***Wetlands***

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency that provides information to the public on the extent and status of the Nation's wetlands. According to the most recent survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Dahl 1999), twenty-one percent of South Carolina is covered by 4,104,805 acres of wetlands. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers implements the federal program for regulating development in wetlands with guidelines established by EPA. The Corps delineates wetlands and determines which wetlands fall under regulatory jurisdiction and require a federal permit for development. At the state level, the primary focus of wetland regulation is through the §401 Water Quality Certification. In accordance with §401 of the Federal Clean Water Act, a certification is required by the state for any Federal permit that may result in a discharge to waters of the state, including wetlands. Applications for wetland alterations may be denied or modified due to the special nature of a wetland or the functions that a wetland provides. Wetland impacts must be compensated for through restoration, enhancement, preservation, or creation and protected in perpetuity. Future development would be legally protected in these areas. Knowledge of areas that are restricted from development due to mitigation or special water classification is useful in planning future development in a watershed. Wetland acreage is quantified in the basin-wide and individual watershed evaluations.

## ***Land Disposal***

Solid Waste Landfills are permitted by the Bureau of Land and Waste Management under Regulation 61-107.19. There are three classifications of Solid Waste Landfills in South Carolina: Class One Landfills, Class Two Landfills, and Class Three Landfills. The landfill classifications are based upon the physical and chemical characteristics of the waste that is disposed in each landfill. There are currently 171 permitted landfills in South Carolina. This total represents 56 Class One Landfills that are limited to disposal of land-clearing debris; 91 Class Two Landfills that receive construction and demolition debris and waste streams that characterize at less than ten times the maximum contamination limits for drinking water; and 24 Class Three Landfill that receive municipal solid wastes and other nonhazardous waste streams that must be characterized prior to acceptance. Solid Waste Landfills are considered point sources of pollution and are thereby required to have BOW industrial storm water permits. Storm water runoff from these

landfills may have an impact on the watershed if it is not managed correctly. Regulatory authority over solid waste disposal activities resides with SCDHEC's Bureau of Land and Waste Management. All active and closed Solid Waste Landfills are identified in the appropriate watershed evaluations.

Land application of wastewater or its by-products is a form of recycling because it allows recovery of elements needed for crop production. Land application of biosolids may be beneficial and environmentally sound when applied at the correct agronomic rate. Land applying biosolids can benefit farmers by offsetting the costs of fertilizer and lime while reducing the pressure on existing landfills. SCDHEC's Bureau of Water, Division of Water Monitoring, Assessment and Protection, Groundwater Management Section conducts a program to prevent and monitor groundwater contamination from nonpoint source pollution from land application of wastewater biosolids, solids, animal manures, biosolids, and sewage sludge. Land application, which is not a discharge, requires a discharge permit (ND). All active industrial and municipal land applications are identified in the appropriate watershed evaluations.

### ***Groundwater Contamination***

All aquifers in the State are potential Underground Sources of Drinking Water and are protected under the S.C. Water Classifications and Standards. Groundwaters are thus protected in a manner consistent with the SCDHEC groundwater protection strategy. Staff hydrogeologists implement a screening program for nonpoint source impacts from pits, ponds, and lagoons associated with the permitted storage, treatment, and disposal of industrial and municipal wastewaters. In cases where a groundwater impact has been identified in violation of S.C. Water Classifications and Standards, appropriate actions will be coordinated with the facility owner to ensure regulatory compliance. The hydrogeologist coordinates with the facility owner to implement source identification, contaminant extent assessments, initiation of contaminant remediation systems, and performance evaluations of corrective actions. In addition to releases from wastewater treatment systems, the staff evaluates releases from other nonpoint sources such as above ground tanks, nonregulated fuel oil tanks, spills and/or leaks. Sites with confirmed groundwater impact will be placed under a Consent Agreement or an Order. SCDHEC's South Carolina Groundwater Contamination Inventory quantifies the status of groundwater quality in South Carolina. The sites in the inventory are known groundwater contamination cases in the State, and are referenced by name and county, and updated annually.