

SCDHEC's Watershed Stewardship Programs

Public participation is an important component of the Department's Watershed Water Quality Management Program. Benefits to this interaction on the local level include improved public awareness about SCDHEC water programs, and increased local interest and participation in water quality improvement. Described below are some of the Department's water programs that encourage public interest and involvement in water quality. These programs and their contacts are listed on the Department's website at <http://www.scdhec.gov/HomeAndEnvironment/Water>.

Source Water Assessment Program

A safe, adequate source of drinking water is key to development of communities and the health of citizens. The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) places an emphasis on protection of sources of drinking water. As a result of the 1996 amendments to the SDWA, source water protection has become a national priority. States are required to develop a plan for assessment of source waters for all federally defined public groundwater and surface water systems.

The Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) involves determining the boundaries of the areas that are the source of waters for public water systems. For groundwater systems, these areas are defined using groundwater flow models. For surface water systems, a distance of 15 miles upstream from the surface water intake is the designated protection area (although certain areas within the basin will be segmented as being of greater vulnerability to contamination from overland flow, groundwater contributions to surface water, and direct spills into the surface water). Known and potential sources of contamination in the delineated area must be identified, and the inventoried sources evaluated to determine the susceptibility of public water systems to such contaminants. Assessments must be made available to the public.

Local involvement is a critical factor in the success of the SWAP, and local governments, citizen groups, environmental groups, water suppliers, and the Department must all work together to increase the general public's awareness of where drinking water comes from and how to better protect sources of drinking water. Implementation of source water protection activities largely occur at the local level, and local authorities may wish to base zoning and land-use planning on the source water assessments. The SWAP is a key part of the Department's watershed management approach. To avoid duplication, information gathered from existing regulatory programs and/or watershed protection efforts is utilized (e.g., ambient monitoring programs, TMDLs, etc.).

Consumer Confidence Reports

The Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) is an annual water quality report required of all community water systems. The rationale behind the CCR is that consumers have a right to know what is in their drinking water and where it comes from. These reports are to educate consumers and help them make informed choices that affect the health of themselves and their families. All CCRs are to include the following basic components:

- the water source, its location, and the availability of source water assessment plan;
- information about the water system (name and telephone number of a contact person, opportunities for public participation, and information for non-English speaking populations if applicable);

- definitions of terms and abbreviations used in the report;
- table of detected contaminants including the known or likely source of the contaminants;
- the health effects language for Maximum Contaminant Level violations and an explanation of the violation;
- information on cryptosporidium, radon, and other contaminants if applicable; and
- educational information that includes an explanation of contaminants and their presence in drinking water, an advisory for immuno-compromised people, the Safe Drinking Water Hotline telephone number, and other statements about lead, arsenic, and nitrate if applicable.

Swimming Advisory Outreach

SCDHEC tests rivers, lakes and streams all over the State. Sometimes these tests show high amounts of bacteria for some streams and rivers. DHEC puts up a swimming advisory sign where high amounts of bacteria have been found and people commonly swim. For more information on the swimming advisories call the hotline at 1-800-360-5655 or check the swimming advisory website at <http://www.scdhec.gov/HomeAndEnvironment/Water/SwimAdvisories>

Fish Advisory Outreach

Based on fish tissue monitoring results assessing mercury levels, SCDHEC and the Department of Natural Resources work together to provide annual fish consumption advisories that tell the public the right amounts and types of fish to eat in South Carolina. The advisories particularly focus on providing statewide advice for at-risk women and children. For more information and the most current advisories, please visit <http://www.scdhec.gov/FoodSafety/FishConsumptionAdvisories>. For a hard copy of the advisories, call SCDHEC's toll-free Fish Consumption Advisory hotline at 1-888-849-7241.

Champions of the Environment

Champions of the Environment encourages, enables and recognizes youth environmental education projects that develop awareness, promote behavior change or improve and protect the water, air and land. Champions has been rewarding South Carolina's kindergarten through twelfth-grade students and teachers since 1993. Grant awards enable schools and communities to participate in activities such as protecting nesting sea turtles, reducing a school's carbon footprint, and protecting water quality; all positively impacting the environment and developing young environmental stewards. Champions is a unique public-private partnership between DHEC, industry partners, and the media. For more information contact the Champions of the Environment coordinator at 803-898-4300 or visit <http://www.scdhec.gov/HomeAndEnvironment/K12SchoolsStudentsTeachers/ContestsGrants/ChampionsoftheEnvironment>

Clean Water State Revolving Fund

Congress created the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) in 1987, to replace the \$201 Construction Grants program. In doing so, state banks were created to lend money for virtually any type of water pollution control infrastructure project. Project types include construction of wastewater treatment systems and nonpoint source pollution control. The interest rate on the loans is always below the current market rate. As repayments are made on the loans, funds are recycled to fund additional water protection projects. The vast majority of the SRF funds have been used for the construction of traditional municipal wastewater treatment systems. Because of its inherent flexibility, the SRF program is well suited to accommodate the watershed approach.

SRF loans are available to units of state, local, and regional government, and special purpose districts. South Carolina law prevents loans from being made directly to private organizations and individuals. Local governments such as cities and counties and other units of government such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Councils of Government, and Water and Sewer Districts are encouraged to apply for SRF loans for nonpoint source projects. Nonpoint source projects may include construction and maintenance of stormwater management facilities, establishment of a stormwater utility, purchase of land for wetlands and riparian zones, and implementation of source water protection assessments. For more information, view the State Revolving Fund web site <http://www.scdhec.gov/HomeandEnvironment/BusinessesandCommunities-GoGreen/EnvironmentalGrantsandLoans/StateRevolvingFund>

Clean Marina Program

South Carolina's Clean Marine Program is part of an international effort, along with 24 other states and territories, to use best management practices to protect and improve water quality at marinas. By meeting prescribed environmental performance criteria, marinas can qualify to fly the Clean Marina flag to attract recreational and transient boaters to their facility. Water quality issues covered by the program include proper cleaning and painting, fuel and used oil management, sewage collection and removal, and emergency preparedness. The program is administered by the South Carolina Marine Association, which is governed by the Clean Marina Committee. The Clean Marina Committee consists of representatives from SCDHEC-OCRM, SCDNR, Palmetto Pride, and the commercial marine industry.