



**Pioneer-Sarah Creek  
Watershed  
Management Commission**

**2004 Annual Report**

This report was prepared  
For the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission  
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# **2004 Annual Report**



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## **Introduction**

The Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission is a joint powers watershed organization formed as required under MN Statutes 103B.201-103B.255 and MN Rules Chapter 8410. Currently, the Commission's membership is comprised of the cities of Greenfield, Independence, Loretto, Maple Plain, Medina, and Minnetrista.

## **History**

In 1978 the Cities of Independence, Medina, and Minnetrista, along with the Hennepin Conservation District, created the Pioneer Creek Watershed Management Commission to protect and manage the natural resources of the Pioneer Creek watershed. Six years later the City of Greenfield offered a resolution to the Pioneer Watershed Commission requesting a merger of the Sarah Creek and Pioneer Creek commissions in order to combine services and avoid creation of numerous small watershed organizations.

In 1984 the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission was officially established through a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) signed by the cities of Corcoran, Greenfield, Independence, Loretto, Maple Plain, Medina, and Minnetrista, Watertown Township, and the Hennepin Conservation District (HCD) under authority conferred to the member parties through MN Statutes 471.59 and 103B.1. This resulted in adding the Sarah Creek watershed and Crow River drainage area to the Commission's legal boundaries.

In 2001 the Commission approved the City of Corcoran's request to withdraw from the Commission and to transfer its small area of land in the Pioneer-Sarah Creek watershed under the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission. Effective in December of that year, Watertown Township also requested to withdraw its membership in the Commission and transfer its total area under the Carver County Water Plan.

In 2003, the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners authorized the establishment of conservation services under County auspices. Effective in June 2003, the Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services (HCDES) began providing technical services to the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission. These services include conservation engineering services related to hydrology and hydraulic analyses, the review of site development plans, and technical assistance regarding best management practices (BMPs) for stormwater management, erosion control and the protection of water quality. This necessitated an amendment to the Joint Powers Agreement since, prior to that time, technical services were provided by the Hennepin County Conservation District, a party of the original JPA.

## **Watershed Management Plan**

In 2000 the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission and the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission worked cooperatively with WSB & Associates to develop and write their second generation watershed management plans. In October 2001 citizens from both watersheds came together to discuss water resource issues within their communities. Topics discussed included education, water quality, non-degradation, shoreline protection, erosion, flooding, groundwater, wetlands, fish and wildlife, livestock/feedlots, population density/development, administration/leadership, and capital funding.

In 2002, the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Commission's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and representatives from various state agencies met to review and develop policies, standards and rules. Input from TAC meetings and the public meeting was used to create a preliminary draft plan that was presented to Pioneer-Sarah Creek watershed residents at a second public meeting in June 2002. A public hearing was conducted on November 21, 2002, to receive comments. Written comments were also received from the City of Greenfield, the Lake Independence Citizens Association, and the Department of Natural Resources. Capital project funding was also discussed. At the end of 2002 the revised draft plan underwent its second 45-day agency comment period.

In August 2004 the City of Greenfield became the final signatory to the Commission's amended and restated Joint Powers Agreement, signaling the onset of BWSR's 60-day final review period. BWSR approved the *Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan* on October 27, 2004, The Commission adopted the plan on December 16, 2004.

## **Local Water Management Plans**

Every member community must prepare and adopt their own water management plans. Local plans must comply with MN Statutes, Sec. 103B.235 and MN Rules 8410.0160 and 8410.0170 regarding local plan content and the requirements of the Commission's Watershed Management Plan. Under the statutes, member cities are required to revise their plans to conform with the Commission's Plan within two years of Commission Plan adoption, or by November 2006. Communities should also include in their updated plans any information that is important to their water resources planning.

The Commission will continue to assist member communities with local plan development. Some member have not developed local plans, having expressed their intentions to wait until the Commission's second generation Watershed Management Plan is adopted. It is an option for these cities to adopt all or part of the Commission's plan as their local plans. Table 1 on the following page shows the status of local regulatory programs as of the year 2003. The Commission will request updated information from the cities.

## **Water Resources**

The major water resources in the Pioneer-Sarah Creek watershed are: Pioneer Creek, which has its headwaters at Lake Independence and travels south and west to the Crow River, and Sarah Creek which begins at Lake Sarah and travels to the Crow River at Rockford. The two largest lakes are Lake Independence and Lake Sarah. The Crow River, which borders Greenfield and Independence, is the receiving water for the entire watershed.

The watershed covers approximately 70.5 square miles. Independence has 29.7 square miles or 42% of the area within the watershed. Greenfield follows with 21.5 square miles or 30% of the watershed. Minnetrista (10.7 - 15%); Medina (7.5 - 10%); Maple Plain (0.8 - 1.1%); and Loretto (0.3 - 0.4%) comprise the remaining area in the watershed.

Land use in the watershed is primarily agricultural and rural residential. Since rural residential development is expected to continue for many years into the future, it is vital that the Commission and member communities work cooperatively to protect the water resources.

**Table 1 - Status of member communities' regulatory programs**

<b>Regulatory Program</b>	<b>Grn</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Lor</b>	<b>MPI</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Min</b>
Adoption of approved Local Stormwater Management Plan	No	No	No	No	No	No
Inclusion of stormwater management needs and problems outlined within the Watershed Plan provided that the impact of the problem and source of the impact are wholly contained within a given community	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adoption of floodplain management ordinance in conformance with Commission policies standards.	Yes*	Yes*	No	No	Yes*	No
Adoption of the MPCAs Best Management Practices and Met Council's Urban Small Sites BMP Manual.	No	Yes?	Yes	No	No	No
Adoption of a shoreland ordinance in compliance with the Minnesota DNR. (** on DNR low priority list)	Yes	Yes	No**	No**	Yes	Yes
Adoption of erosion and sedimentation control policies in conformance with Commission policies and standards.	No	No	Yes	No	Yes*	No
Adoption and approval of a stormwater system maintenance plan which meets or exceeds the requirements as described in the policies and standards of this Plan.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Acceptance of the local government unit role in the implementation of the 1991 Wetland Conservation Act, if a member community so chooses.	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Adoption and approval of a Wetland Management Plan (can be through implementation of Local Stormwater Plan)	No	No	No	No	No	No
Development and adoption of a well head protection and spill prevention program (encouraged, but not required)	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adoption of policies requiring major stormwater storage facilities to accommodate 100-year critical duration event.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adoption of policy that states the local community will sweep paved urban section streets at least once annually.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Require rate control structures and stormwater drainageways be included in drainage, utility, or flowage easement.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adoption of policies that maintain existing discharge rates during 2-, 10-, and 100-year storm events.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adoption of policies that maintain pre-development flow rates within Pioneer and Sarah Creek stream channels for the 2-, 10-, and 100-year events.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Development shall not alter timing of runoff resulting from a 100-year event of critical duration for a subwatershed.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adoption of policies that require pretreatment of stormwater runoff to the Nationwide Urban Runoff Program (NURP) recommendations or MPCA guidelines in the design and construction of new or modifications to existing stormwater conveyance systems wherever possible and feasible. (***)only in shoreland districts)	Yes ***	No	Yes	No	No	Yes*
Adoption of policies requiring removal of floating debris for 2-year event for new/redeveloped treatment pond outlets.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Policy requiring no net increase in pollutant loads allowed as a result of development.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adoption of the water quality goals outlined within the Commission's Plan.	No	No	No	No	No	No
Development and adoption of a Wetland Management Plan	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adoption of wetland buffer standards	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Cooperation with the Department of Health to properly seal abandoned wells	No	No	No	No	No	No
Encouragement of infiltration as indicated in Plan as part of local policies	No	No	No	No	No	No
Mechanism to submit applications to the Commission at the time of premininary plat approval.	No	No	No	No	No	No

\* May need to be updated

## Board of Commissioners

A Board of Commissioners serves as the governing body of the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission. The Commissioners are appointed by the member communities. Their duties include preparing and adopting a watershed management plan; reviewing and approving local water management plans, reviewing development plans, and exercising the authority of a watershed management organization to regulate the use and development of land when an approved local plan is not in place or when a local government is not enforcing the policies of the Commission.

The individuals appointed by the member cities to serve as Commissioners in 2004 are:

<b>Member</b>	<b>Represented by</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Phone/E-mail</b>
Greenfield	Roger Mattila 5475 Townhall Drive Greenfield, MN 55357	Excom	763.477.6464 powerclean @powercleaners.com
Independence	Jeff Sandberg 6442 City West Parkway Eden Prairie, MN 55344	Excom, TAC	952.229.7125 jsandberg @lifetimefitness.com
Loretto	Kent Torve 90 Mallard Lane	Vice Chair Excom, TAC	763.479.4209 ktorve@wenck.com
Maple Plain	Jack Vigoren P O Box 97 Maple Plain, MN 55359	Secy-Treas. Excom, TAC	763.479.2090 cityhall@mapleplain.com
Medina	Don Johnston 3169 Aspen Avenue Maple Plain, MN 55359	TAC	763.315.6331 johnston@stsconsultants.com
Minnetrissa	Lisa Whalen 605 County Road 110N Minnetrissa, MN 55364	Chair Excom, TAC	952.472.2336 tjw_lew@yahoo.com

Excom = Executive Committee

TAC = Technical Advisory Committee

The Commission meets at 4:00 p.m. on the last Thursday of every month at Independence City Hall. The meetings are open to the public. (Beginning in April 2005, the meeting day has been moved to the third Thursday of the month.)

## Staff and Consultants

The Commission has no employees. Independent consultants perform administrative, legal, technical consulting and wetland consulting services for the Commission and are selected biannually.

The 2004 consultants are:

	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Phone/E-mail</b>
James Kujawa	Hennepin County Dept. of Env. Services 417 North Fifth Street	Technical Advisor TAC	612.348.7338 James.Kujawa @co.hennpin.mn.us
Judie Anderson	JASS 3235 Fernbrook Lane Plymouth, MN 55447	Administrator Excom, TAC	763.553.1144 judie@jass.biz
Joel Jamnik	Campbell Knutson PA 1380 Corporate Center Curve Eagan, MN 55121	Attorney	651.452.5000 jjamnik@ck-law.com
John Barten	Three Rivers Park Dist. 3800 County Road 24 Maple Plain, MN 55359	Water Quality TAC	763.694-7841 jbarten@ threeriversparkdistrict.org
Kjolhaug Env. Servs,	26105 Wild Rose Lane	Wetland monitoring	952.401.8757
SEH, Inc.	1200 25 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South St. Cloud, MN 56302	Wetland monitoring consultant	320.229.4300
URS Corporation	700 Third Street South Minneapolis, MN 55415	Wetland monitoring consultant	612.370.0700
SRF Consulting Group, Inc.	One Carlson Pkwy N Suite 150 Minneapolis, MN 55447	Wetland monitoring consultant	763.475.0010

Excom = Executive Committee

TAC = Technical Advisory Committee

## Project Reviews

The Commission reviewed 30 new plans in 2004. They were reviewed for erosion and sediment control, wetland, floodplain, and stormwater management issues as well as DNR permits. The Commission discusses and approves plans at its monthly meetings. A list of each project, location, and critical areas reviewed appears in *Appendix 1*.

## Stream Monitoring

Automated monitoring stations, located at the outlets of Pioneer and Sarah Creeks, provide both flow and water quality monitoring data. Tipping bucket rain gauges are also maintained at both sites. Sample were collected from storm events and nonevent flow. The Commission works with Three Rivers Park District to operate these stations. A map of the stream monitoring sites and analyses of the streamflow and water quality monitoring data for Pioneer-Sarah Creek and its tributaries are summarized in *Appendices 2 and 3*.

It is a goal of the Commission to determine pollutant loading and measure continuous flow in both creeks. The Commission will continue to work with Three Drivers Park District staff to operate the gauging and water quality monitoring stations on Pioneer-Sarah Creek and make real-time adjustments to the sampling needs based on the field and climate conditions.

## Lake Monitoring

The Commission has been monitoring lakes within the watershed since 1989. In 2004 the Commission monitored Independence, Spurzem, Sarah and Little Long Lakes in cooperation with the Three Rivers Park District. Excerpts from the Park District's report are included in *Appendices 4, 5 and 6*. No lakes were monitored this year as part of Metropolitan Council's citizen assisted monitoring program (CAMP).

**Table 2. Lake and Watershed Characteristics**

<b>Lake</b>	<b>Size (acres)</b>	<b>Max Depth (feet)</b>	<b>Mean Depth (feet)</b>	<b>Watershed Size (acres)</b>	<b>Watershed Land Use Characteristics</b>
Independence	844	58	18	8512	agricultural, hobby farms, rural residential
Spurzem	73	36	13	3136	agricultural, hobby farms, rural residential
Sarah	552	60	18	4530	agricultural, rural residential
Little Long	108	76	23	unknown	agricultural, rural residential

## Lake Independence Diagnostic Feasibility Study

Lake Independence is an 851-acre lake located within the municipal boundaries of two cities, Independence and Medina. As with many lakes in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, it is used heavily for recreation and is prized for its aesthetic value by homeowners. Over the past several decades, the lake has experienced increasingly impaired water quality that has reduced the lake's recreational and aesthetic value. In 2003, the lake was designated as an impaired water body by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) based upon its recent water quality history (MPCA 2002 303(d) list).

To better understand the factors that have been affecting the water quality of Lake Independence, the Three Rivers Park District initiated a comprehensive monitoring plan in 1990. This included biweekly monitoring of in-lake conditions during ice-free periods from 1990 to 2003, and intensive stream monitoring in 1996, 1997 and 2001 at a majority of the sites where water flowed into the lake. In addition, computer models were developed and calibrated with actual field data. These calibrated models were used to estimate additional inflow of water and pollutants from sources that were not monitored and to estimate the relative contribution of pollutants from given land use types.

The data collected indicated that Lake Independence had regularly experienced impaired water quality during the monitored period. The inflow monitoring results and computer modeling identified major sources of pollutants within the Lake Independence watershed and allowed for the characterization of flow volumes, pollutant concentrations, and overall loadings for each inflow site. This information was used to develop a list of potential management activities to address each identified source of pollutants.

The primary goal of the diagnostic feasibility study was to develop a list of potential management actions and estimate their associated costs, effectiveness, expected longevity, and technical feasibility based upon the observed field data, computer model predictions, and characteristics of each potential source. Development of an actual management plan to improve the water quality of Lake Independence will require cooperation between all concerned parties to evaluate and select the best management alternatives based upon the contents of this report and any additional information deemed to be pertinent.

A preliminary draft of the *Lake Independence Diagnostic Feasibility Report* was provided to the Commission in September 2003. It identified potential nutrient source that have contributed to poor in-lake water quality. There has been a considerable amount of nutrient loading from the watershed as well as an in-lake internal loading component. While the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission has implemented rules and regulations to limit the nutrient loading to Lake Independence, improving the water quality of the lake will require additional management efforts from both an in-lake and watershed perspective. The study identified several best management practices that could be implemented to further improve the lake's water quality.

The Commission sponsored a stakeholders meeting on March 24, 2004 to begin discussion of these options and their technical and financial feasibility. In the months following that meeting a Stakeholders Committee was formed, a work plan developed and water quality goals for the lake determined.

In addition, John Barten, Three Rivers Park District; and Commission Staff met with Tim Larson from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to begin the process for total maximum daily load (TMDL) funding. A TMDL is the sum of the allowable loads of a single pollutant from all contributing point and nonpoint sources that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards.) The *Feasibility Report* prepared by the Park District forms the basis of the project. Final phosphorus loads and allocations must be determined and agreed upon by the parties who will eventually implement the practices in the program. The practices to reduce the loads will consist of all or some combination of the management alternatives in the Diagnostic Report. Further meetings of the Stakeholders Committee and with the public will be necessary in order to come to agreement on limits and the management practices necessary to meet them.

A work plan is required before entering into a contract with MPCA and a final report must be sent to MPCA when the project is completed. The final report must include an assessment of the lake, a description of project activities and results, a plan for the allocation of pollutant loads, a public outreach plan, and an implementation plan to achieve and maintain water quality standards.

During 2004, the Stakeholders Committee met monthly to begin the TMDL process. The Committee developed water quality goals for the lake, determined the nutrient reductions necessary to meet the goals, and discussed possible waste load reduction allocations. The group reached agreement on the sources of excess nutrients, and developed a list of potential BMPs to reduce nutrient loading to the lake. In 2005, the Committee will finalize waste load reduction allocations, determine which BMPs are financially and socially acceptable, and develop a time line for implementation. The implementation plan will determine which project partners are responsible for implementation tasks and decide funding mechanisms for the necessary tasks.

The *Lake Independence Diagnostic Feasibility Report* is available on the Commission's website, [www.pioneersarahcreek.org](http://www.pioneersarahcreek.org).

## **Lake Sarah Outlet Channel**

In 2003 the cities of Greenfield and Independence teamed up to develop plans to clean the outlet channel to Lake Sarah. Because of concerns about the potential of the cities' proposal to excessively lower lake levels and impact a protected wetland immediately downstream of Lake Sarah, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted an investigation of the outlet in December 2003. The final permit from the DNR allowed cleaning out the vegetation in the channel areas of the lake outlet but no lowering of the channel or the outlet except for 6" to 12" in the area of the old railroad bed located approximately 400' south of the existing railroad.

The City of Greenfield chose not to lower the approach area as recommended by DNR and instead requested the DNR to permit a cable concrete weir structure at the outlet to stabilize the elevation. The Commission approved the structure and recommended to DNR that it be set at the pre-1990 historic elevation as recommended in the DNR Investigation report.

A public meeting was held August 26, 2004 to hear public comments on the weir structure and outlet elevation to the lake and on September 9, 2004, the DNR issued an amendment to the original channel cleanout permit allowing Greenfield to construct the cable concrete weir as proposed. The cable concrete weir was installed in November. Pictures of this project are found in *Appendix 7*.

## **Macroinvertebrate Monitoring (River Watch)**

Hennepin County has 450 miles of streams. These streams vary from permanent watercourses to drainage ditches with variable flow and stream sizes vary from the broad Crow River to a small creek flowing through a backyard. Land use in the region is diverse including agricultural, residential, industrial, rural, urban, and forested areas.

In order to learn more about these local waterways, Hennepin Conservation District (HCD) initiated a benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring program in 1995 to provide hands-on environmental education for high school and college students, promote river stewardship, and obtain water quality information on streams in Hennepin County. Intended to connect teachers and students with professionals to monitor the health of local streams the River Watch program has expanded to include twenty-seven active sampling sites (shown on the map in *Appendix 8*.) In 2004, an estimated 900 students monitored 20 sites in Hennepin County.

The Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission has been a sponsor of the River Watch program since 1998 and has two monitoring sites. Site 12 is located on the Crow River on the western edge of the watershed. Water quality here is far more dependent on land use activity in the greater Crow River watershed which extends through several counties in central Minnesota. The Crow River flows through Lake Rebecca Park Reserve just before it is sampled in downtown Rockford. Rockford High School monitored this site from 1996 to 1999. In the fall of 1999, Teacher Steve Merten and students from West Lutheran High School took over the site. In 2001, 2003 and 2004 both Rockford High School and West Lutheran monitored Site 12.



Pebble count at site 12, fall 2004



Rockford High School monitors at Site 24 fall 2004

Site 24 is the program's first site on Pioneer Creek. It is located adjacent to an Independence city park surrounded by agricultural land that is being converted to suburban housing developments on the north side of the Creek. Several homes now border the creek and much of the native vegetation has been cleared around those homes. Future erosion of the bank due to vegetation removal is a concern. Students from Rockford High School and teacher Jason Hester began monitoring this site in spring 2001.

Results of the monitoring conducted at sites 12 and 24 are included in *Appendix 9*. A detailed analysis of all 27 sites is contained in *2004 Hennepin County River Watch Results*, available at <http://www.co.hennepin.mn.us> key word River Watch.

## **Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)**

The Commission serves as the local government unit (LGU) for administering the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) for the cities of Greenfield, Independence, Loretto and Maple Plain. The Commission reviews drain and fill applications and replacement plans, attends Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) meetings, and fulfills other requirements of WCA. [Beginning in 2005, the City of Independence began serving as the LGU for administering WCA in their city.]

The Commission's goal is to assure that WCA rules are properly implemented, wetland violations are resolved and replacement plans are reviewed. In 2004 the Commission reviewed 14 plans involving wetlands. The Commission received no new wetland banking applications in 2004 but is continuing to work on several applications received in previous years. Additional applications are expected in 2005. They also participated in three TEPs.

No new potential Wetland Conservation Act violations were investigated within the watershed in 2004. One previous violation remains to be resolved. One exemption request involving a violation was appealed to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) where it was denied. In 2004, this decision was contested in Hennepin county District Court. Three mediation sessions were held with the District Court Magistrate and a final agreement reached in December.

Four outside firms were approved to perform wetland consulting services for the Commission in 2003-2004 and are listed on page 5 of this report.

The goals of complying with the WCA requirements are accomplished through the Commission's Watershed Management Plan review and assistance process. The goal of minimizing impacts is accomplished through technical assistance to landowners, plan reviews and meetings with developers. The Commission will continue to serve as the LGU for those cities requesting it, ensure that the WCA rules are properly implemented, work with landowners and developers to avoid wetland impacts wherever possible, review replacement plans, and oversee wetland banking.

## **Best Management Practices**

The Commission has a goal to work with cooperating agencies and landowners in the watershed to install best management practices on lands in the watershed. This program was funded in the past by a Metropolitan Council Twin Cities Water Quality Initiative (TCWQI) grant. The Commission will continue to work with landowners to initiate and implement best management practices in the watershed.

## **Written Communication**

The Pioneer-Sarah Creek Commission publishes an annual newsletter that is transmitted to member municipalities for dissemination to their citizens. In 2004 the newsletter was provided in electronic format. (A copy is included in *Appendix 10*.) In addition, from time to time, news releases are provided to the member and their official newspapers for publication.

Currently the Commission is developing a website to provide watershed news to a larger audience. The Watershed Management Plan, monthly meeting materials, project reviews, annual reports, newsletters and other watershed-related information will be posted there.

## **Proposals for Service**

The biennial solicitation for interest proposals for professional services will be repeated early in 2005

## **Financial Reporting**

*Appendices 11,12 and 13* include, respectively, the Commission's approved budget for 2004, a report of revenues and expenditures for 2004, and the 2004 Financial Review prepared by Johnson & Company, Ltd.

## **Work Plan for 2005**

In addition to continuing the programs and activities described above, the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission has developed a water resource management program that reflects the needs and concerns of the Commission, its member communities and the residents. The implementation program will be reviewed annually by the Commission. Studies and capital improvements identified in the Commission's second generation Watershed Management Plan may be completed entirely or partially by member communities, the Commission, or a joint effort between them.

Due to the funding constraints of the Commission, it has determined it will primarily focus on a few projects at a time and consider other projects as funding becomes available. In the immediate future, the Commission intends to focus on water quality improvement projects for watershed lakes.

A list of current and future capital improvement projects can be found in the Commission's second generation Watershed Management Plan. The Plan will be uploaded to the Commission's website in 2005.