



The Plan addresses surface water, groundwater, fresh and salt waters, and aquatic habitats, including wetlands. There are 24 potential pollution sources and 4 aquatic habitat topics discussed with proposed actions for each.

## Vision

*RI'S WATER RESOURCES WILL SUPPORT HEALTHY AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS AND MEET THE NEEDS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS BY PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH, SUPPLYING HIGH QUALITY DRINKING WATER, PROVIDING BOUNTIFUL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTING A VIBRANT ECONOMY.*

## Goals

**WQ #1.** Protect the existing quality of RI's waters and aquatic habitats and prevent further degradation.

**WQ #2.** Restore degraded waters and aquatic habitats to a condition that meets their water quality and habitat goals.

## Management Principles

Implementing the Vision will require that RI residents recognize the vulnerable nature of our water resources and aquatic habitats, and the importance of these resources to our health, the environment and the economic well-being of the State. The foundation for the Plan is a set of water quality management principles upon which the plan has been developed. A few of these are:

- Water pollution should be prevented whenever possible — prevention is a more cost-effective strategy than source control and restoration.
- Protection and restoration are equally important to achieving RI's goals for water quality.
- Rhode Island citizens are informed and aware of water quality management priorities and efforts to prevent and abate water pollution problems.
- Stakeholders are involved in the planning and implementation of programs for water resource protection and restoration through public engagement.
- A collaborative effort is necessary across all governmental jurisdictions, agencies and programs to ensure success in protecting and restoring RI's water resources.
- Limited resources at all levels of government require and justify the prioritization of protection and restoration efforts.
- Compliance with applicable federal, state and local regulatory programs is necessary for water quality protection and restoration.
- Water quality management is based on sound science and regularly integrates new information.
- New technologies are adopted for use in water pollution management where beneficial.

## Vision,

## Goals & Management Principles

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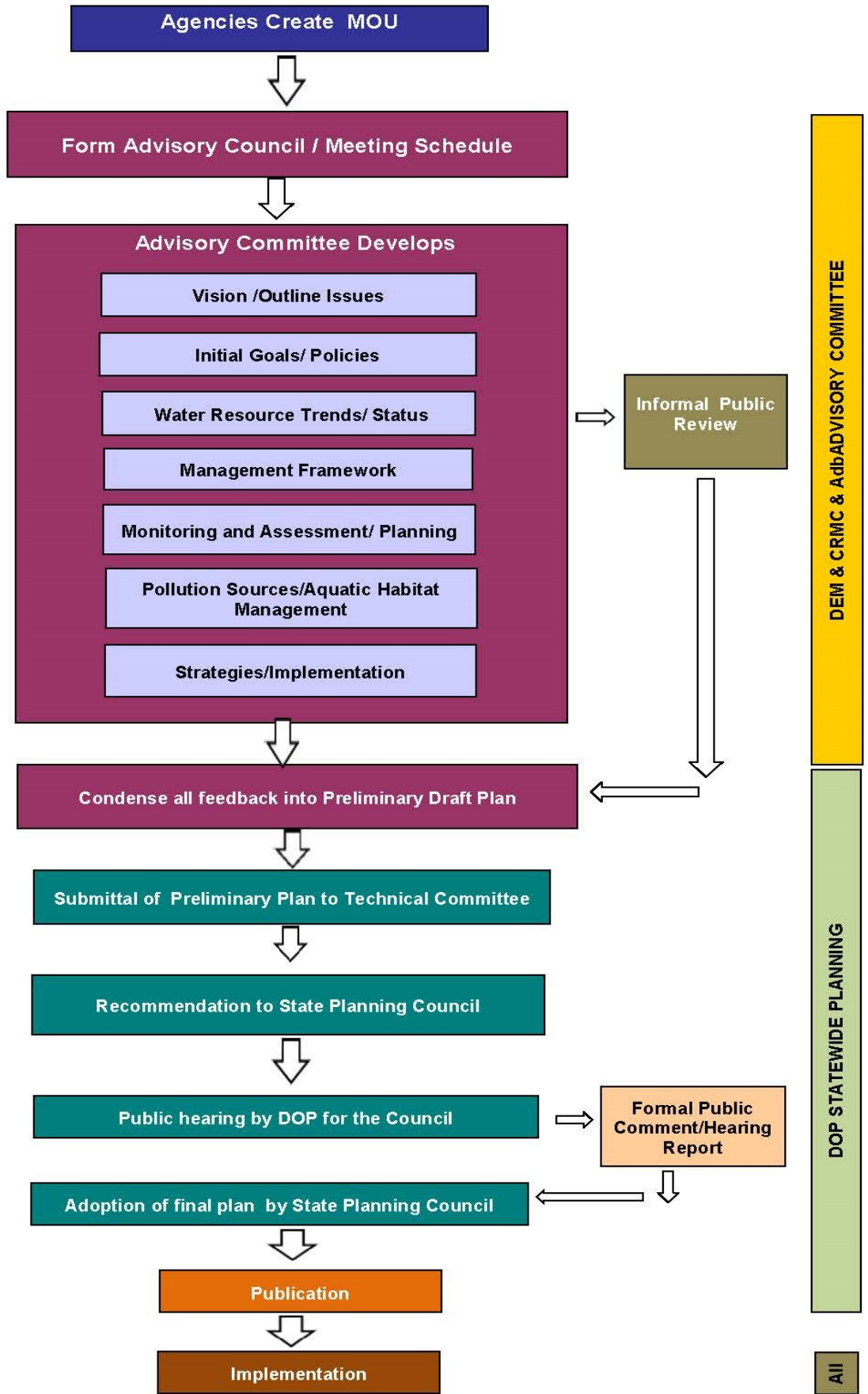
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About the Plan & Implementation

*Water Quality 2035* contains six main parts and supporting appendices. Each part address a key question central to water quality management in Rhode Island. Policies to implement the Vision and the Goals appear in the text related to the topics discussed. The Implementation Matrix in Part 6 contains all polices and the related actions.

**Part 1 Introduction & Vision** - This section provides an overview of the contents and introduces the Vision and goals of the Plan.

**Part 2 Rhode Island's Water Resources & Trends** - This section explains the Water Cycle, defines watersheds, and contains facts about Rhode Island's coastal and freshwater resources. It provides trends on water quality and aquatic habitat conditions and finally details the current status of Rhode Island waters through describing water quality impairments and threats.

**Part 3 Water Quality Management Framework** – This section describes the management approach of the Plan, details the various roles and responsibilities for water quality management and discusses setting watershed priorities. It begins to present policies to implement the goals identified in Part 1.

**Part 4 Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment**—This Part describes what necessary environmental monitoring is needed in Rhode Island and presents an assessment of water quality and aquatic habitats along with certain polices.

**Part 5 Planning**—This Part talks about using watersheds as a Basis for planning and management and the integration of planning activities to support watershed management. It presents polices for water quality management planning.

**Part 6 Pollution Source and Aquatic Habitat Management**—This Part discusses overarching management issues for water quality management and 24 potential pollution sources and contains the Implementation Matrix. An excerpt of the **draft** planning actions are shown below. **Draft** actions for the Plan were developed with the following parameters:

Actions for each policy

Lead agency (Lead) & Supporting Agencies (Support)

Timeframes

As Necessary (AN)

Ongoing (O)

Short Term (1-2 years) Medium and Long-term

Medium term (3-5 years)

Long term (more than 5 years)

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&  
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IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX - POLICIES and ACTIONS

	LEAD	SUPPORT	TIME LINE
<b>Part 5 Planning<sup>6</sup></b>			
Planning Policy 1: Support, promote and facilitate sustainable land use practices and planning that protects water quality from new development and improves water quality on redevelopment.			
Planning Policy 2: Watershed plans are the basis for implementation actions at the state and local level.			
Planning Policy 3: Ensure planning for water quality protection and restoration is effectively coordinated to maximize efforts.			
Planning Policy 4: Support the development of a state lake management program.			
<b>Actions</b>			
A. Implement existing TMDLs and develop new TMDLs where necessary.	DEM	M	O
B. Municipalities adopt LID ordinances. (see also stormwater)	URI	DOP	O
C. Promote alternative approaches to development that reduce potential impacts to water quality.	State	DOP	O
D. Municipalities adopt resource specific overlay protection zones in their zoning ordinances for sensitive resources (e.g., aquifer recharge areas, wellhead protection areas, drinking water reservoir watersheds, etc.).	M	DOP	MT
E. Incorporate maps of all tributary streams, wetlands and other sensitive areas into the community comprehensive plan to guide growth away from these sensitive resources.	DOP	DEM	MT
F. Evaluate use of the urban services boundary as a tool in prioritizing water quality protection and restoration	DEM	DOP	O





Some Key Points

- Water is the most important natural resource to the future of RI.
- Water Quality is the sum of the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of a water resource, including its suitability as aquatic habitat.
- Water quality has improved dramatically over the past few decades, but much more needs to be done to meet water quality goals.
- Pathogens and excess nutrients are the most common water quality problems, and physical modifications and invasive species are the primary threats to aquatic habitats.
- Water quality management is a shared responsibility among all levels of government, non-governmental organizations and individuals.
- Water quality and aquatic habitat are most effectively managed on a watershed basis. Watershed management is the management of land use, water use and human activities in a comprehensive manner to protect and restore water quality in a watershed. Local watershed organizations play important roles in watershed management.
- RI's water quality management framework includes the following steps: monitor, assess, plan strategies, implement strategies, and evaluate results. The capacity of the State, municipalities and other partners to effectively implement this framework is an on-going concern.
- Water quality monitoring is essential for effective water resources management. Stewardship of aquatic habitats requires monitoring to characterize the ecological health and functioning of the targeted habitat.
- Climate change will have a significant impact on aquatic habitats and water quality management strategies.

Key  
Points  
&  
Background  
Information

Background Information

Two background reports have been completed. To see more details on the update process, for a full copy of a draft, or either report look on line at:

<http://www.planning.ri.gov/statewideplanning/land/water.php>

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**Issue Brief**  
Economic Benefits of Water Quality

August 2014

The Rhode Island Division of Planning announces the development of an update to the State Guide Plan (State Guide Plan Element 731, Water Quality 2035, Water Quality Management Plan, is being developed by the Land Use Unit of the Division, the Department of Environment (DEM) Office of Water Resources, and the RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). It is being guided by an advisory committee of stakeholders. Last approved in 1995 as the Nonpoint Source Management Plan for water quality, the new Guide Plan will contain a vision for water quality protection, a narrative of current trends, challenges and opportunities, and an analysis of strategic options. Included will be updating goals and policies to provide a comprehensive water quality management program for the State. The Update will address the current water quality management systems in RI including those established by federal statutes: the DEM Nonpoint Source Pollution and the CRMC Coastal Nonpoint Source Management Program. The update will also consolidate 2 other existing State Guide Plan Elements which address water quality management into the Update. The following Elements will be included and will be reworded upon adoption of the Update:

- (1992) Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Narragansett Bay, Element 725
- (2006) Rivers Policy and Classification Plan, Element 142

Overall water quality in RI is viewed as very good. The quality of our water both fresh and salt, is a precious resource that we need to protect. RI has nationally ranked high quality public drinking water and salt water beaches. Rhode Island's tourism industry in general, is dependent on maintaining high quality fresh and salt waters. According to the US Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, all tourism in RI is expected to generate \$1.8 billion in consumer spending and 23,000 direct jobs. Tourism though is not the only reason why we should strive to maintain our water quality. There are also public health, economic, educational, research-based, and quality of life advantages to fresh and saltwater resources. The quality of water in Rhode Island is an important factor for drinking water use and several other key economic sectors such as industry, fishing and recreation. It is important that we continue to stress the importance of local investment in coastal restoration as 122 is leveraged for each dollar of Federal money from Coastal Program. Economic activity in the State could be drastically impacted if we do not maintain the quality of our fresh and salt water resources. For example, the direct and indirect economic activity generated from over three million beach visitors each year is important to preserve. If beach closure rates increase due to a degraded water quality, not only does the State stand to lose tax revenue but related industries such as hospitality, restaurant transportation, etc. can be detrimentally affected. Preserving the quality of our water should remain a high priority for the State as it is one of our most precious natural as well as economic resources as it contributes significantly to our quality of life in Rhode Island. Recent studies from Maine and Minnesota have found that property values can decline by thousands of dollars when a significant decline in adjacent water quality occurs.

CRMC State Guide Plan Element 731

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STATEWIDE PLANNING TECHNICAL  
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**ROAD SALT/SAND  
APPLICATION IN RHODE  
ISLAND**

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