

## 01 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this overview is to briefly outline the content of the State Guide Plan Element: *Water Quality 2035*, Rhode Island Water Quality Management Plan. For the full plan or for more information on the purpose of other State Guide Plan Elements and to see the rest of the State Guide Plan Overview see:

<http://www.planning.ri.gov/>

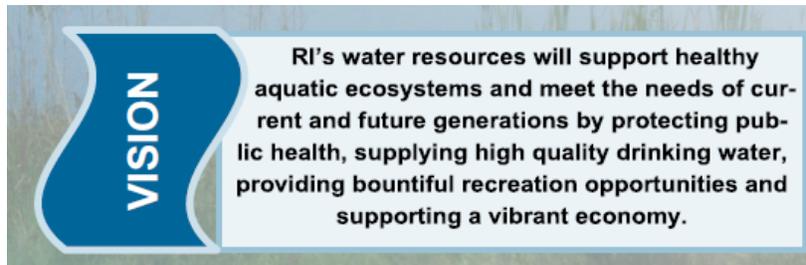
The original water quality management plan for the State was the *Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Plan* adopted by the State Planning Council, as Element 731 of the State Guide Plan, in October 1995. This plan updates and replaces the 1995 plan and was adopted by State Planning Council on October 2016. In addition, *Water Quality 2035* updates and replaces three previous other State Guide Plan Elements related to water quality:

- #162 Rivers Policy and Classification Plan (2004)
- #711 Blackstone Region Water Resources Management Plan (1981)
- #715 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Narragansett Bay (1992).

The Plan was developed with guidance from an advisory committee of stakeholders. It serves to support both the inland and coastal water nonpoint source management programs as required by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This Plan describes existing practices, programs, and activities in major water quality areas and develops recommendations specific to each. It is intended to advance the effectiveness of public and private stewardship of the State's high quality waters for the next 20 years. As an Element of the State Guide Plan, this Plan sets forth goals and policies that must, under State Law, be embodied in future updates of comprehensive community plans. It serves to guide the activities of the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC).

## 02 VISION STATEMENT:

The *Water Quality 2035* Vision is that:

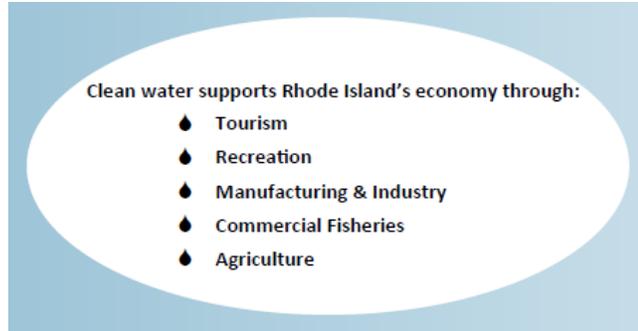


## 03 ISSUES & GOALS

Water quality affects every citizen in our State and it is an important measure of the quality of life in RI. We depend on healthy sustainable ecosystems to provide us with the clean water we need for drinking water, recreation, and a range of economic activities. Healthy ecosystems are important to environmental and human health and well-being, yet they are often taken for granted.

The goals of the Plan resulted from an evaluation of issues by the Water Quality Advisory Committee. Responsibility for addressing these issues is shared by the CRMC, DEM, Municipalities,

and others. Pertinent information from various stakeholders was brought forth to define the issues, develop goals, and recommend the strategies that comprise the Implementation Matrix. Issues from all of the previous SGP Elements were reviewed and updated, consolidated, or removed – depending upon whether they were a continuing concern or had been acted upon. The Advisory Committee benefitted from recently completed program plans for the management of Narragansett Bay, non-point source pollution and aquatic habitats. Specific goals and strategies were proposed to implement the Plan as developed by the Advisory Committee, recommended by the Technical Committee and approved by the State Planning Council. By drawing together and describing in one place the programs, state policies and various actions related to water quality and aquatic habitat protection and restoration, this Plan implements the Vision using the following 2 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.

#### **04 MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES**

The foundation for the Plan is a set of water quality management principles upon which the Plan has been developed. These are:

- Protection and restoration are equally important to achieving RI's goals for water quality.
- Water pollution prevention whenever possible is a more cost-effective strategy than source control and restoration.
- Compliance with applicable federal, state and local regulatory programs is necessary for water quality protection and restoration.
- Watersheds are the appropriate unit for managing water quality and water resources.
- Water quality management is based on sound science and regularly integrates new information, including improved scientific knowledge, technological innovations and understanding of climate change principles.
- Monitoring is an essential component of water quality management effective management.
- Indicators of environmental conditions and performance, as well as analytical tools, are used to evaluate and report on progress toward water quality goals and objectives.
- Integrated, well supported data management systems are essential for water resource protection and restoration program management.
- Limited resources at all levels of government require and justify the prioritization of protection and restoration efforts.
- New technologies are adopted for use in water pollution management where beneficial.
- Stakeholders are involved in the planning and implementation of programs for water resource protection and restoration through meaningful public engagement.

- Rhode Island citizens are informed and aware of water quality management priorities and efforts to prevent and abate water pollution problems.
- All levels of government (federal, state, local), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including watershed organizations, private entities and individuals, share in the responsibility and duty to protect and restore RI's water resources.
- State and quasi-state facilities demonstrate leadership in implementing effective water quality management practices.
- A collaborative effort is necessary across all governmental jurisdictions, agencies and programs to ensure success and efficiency in protecting and restoring RI's water resources.

## 05 IMPLEMENTATION

Achieving healthy aquatic ecosystems and other water quality goals will require sustained and expanded efforts to prevent and abate pollution and habitat degradation. Through the implementation of Clean Water Act and other programs, substantial progress has been made controlling the discharge of pollutants associated with sanitary and industrial wastewater. Managing the more diffuse sources of pollution associated with human land uses, including the generation of stormwater runoff, continues to present significant challenges. More work is also needed to mitigate the historic alterations made to many aquatic habitats. As indicated in the Implementation Matrix, a wide range of actions will be needed to advance progress toward water quality goals. Applying watershed approaches is recognized as the most effective approach to long-term management of water resources. Collaboration among all levels of government and other stakeholders on water protection and restoration will be important to the future success of our collective efforts.

Noted throughout the Plan are opportunities for the State to work closely with municipal governments to strengthen implementation of Rhode Island's management of water quality and aquatic habitats. These include improving coordination and integration of infrastructure planning for water supply, public and on-site wastewater disposal, and stormwater and floodplain management. In addition, fostering close alignment of comprehensive land use plans with infrastructure planning will serve to facilitate sustainable economic growth.

The Implementation Matrix contains the goals, policies, and actions for all of the overarching general topics and the various water quality topics described in the Plan. Actions were developed for each policy and have a lead agency, supporting agencies, and timeframes. Timeframes are As Necessary, Ongoing, Short Term (1-2 years), Medium term (3-5 years), and Long term (more than 5 years).

**The Plan has actions for different pollution sources such as:**

**Wastewater Treatment Facilities (WWTF)**  
**Onsite Wastewater Treatment**  
**Stormwater Management**  
**Road Salt & Sand Application**  
**Other Discharges to Groundwater**  
**Agriculture**  
**Lawn/Turf Management**  
**Pesticide Application**  
**Boating & Marinas**  
**Storage of Hazardous Materials**  
**Petroleum Product Spills**  
**Above Ground Storage Tanks**  
**Solid Waste Management**  
**Contaminated Site Clean-ups**  
**Dredging and Dredge Material**  
**Pet Waste Management**  
**Water Fowl**  
**Land Application of WWTF Solids**  
**Surface Mining**  
**Silviculture**  
**Atmospheric Deposition**  
**Marine & Riverine Debris**  
**Aquaculture**