

Source Water Protection Goals for Public Water Supplies
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ABSTRACT

The ultimate goal of Ohio's Source Water Protection (SWAP) Program is for public water systems to have high-quality source waters that require minimal treatment. The Program measures its progress toward this goal mostly indirectly, through the number of systems that are implementing protective strategies. For surface water systems, protection strategies can be put in place by individual water systems or the water systems can work within the broader context of a local watershed group and integrate drinking water protection strategies into a Watershed Action Plan.

Source Water Protection Plans for both ground water and surface water include strategies based on education/outreach, contingency planning, and BMPs for specific contaminant sources. In the Sandusky Watershed there are 229 ground water systems and eight surface water systems.

As required by the Clean Water Act, Ohio EPA recently developed a methodology to assess the public drinking water supply beneficial use for surface waters with drinking water intakes. This new program utilizes the authority of the Clean Water Act to identify impaired source waters and direct future TMDL efforts and prioritization on those areas of impairment. The SWAP Program will benefit from water quality data collected as part of these assessments, as it provides a useful tool to measure source water quality changes. In addition, this data will supplement watershed data that the Watershed Group may be collecting.

During 2006, existing source water data was evaluated for each of the eight surface water-based public water systems in the Sandusky River watershed. In most cases the data collected to date proved insufficient for completing a public drinking water supply beneficial use assessment; however, two areas were found to be impaired due to nitrate levels. Two more were placed on a watch list for nitrate and two on a watch list for pesticides.

The Source Water Protection Program is positioned to help synergize the various strengths of the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act. Watershed programs and data are used to enhance the public water system's goals, and source water protection efforts at each system—mandated by the Safe Drinking Water Act—are used to enhance the watershed group's efforts. Above all, the genuine concern that nearly all Ohioans feel about the quality of their drinking water can be translated to a concern for the bodies of water that are its sources.