Overview of Water Framework Directive

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Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy

- Agreed September 2000
- Expected to be formally adopted shortly and enter into force on publication in the Official Journal of the European Communities

Applies to:
- Quality and Quantity
- Inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwaters

Principal Objective:
- Protect and Improve Aquatic Ecosystems
- Promote Sustainable Water Use
- Alleviate impacts of floods and droughts

and Contribute to:
- Sufficient supply of good quality water
- Protect territorial and marine waters
- Comply with relevant international agreements and progressively reduce emissions of hazardous substances

Main Provisions of the Directive
- River Basin Management/ RBDs
- Environmental Objectives
- Assess characteristics of river basins and human impacts
- Monitor status of surface and groundwaters
Main Provisions of the Directive (contd.)

- Establish Programme of Measures
- River Basin Management Plans
- Public Consultation

Challenges

- Extremely demanding timetable
- Complexity of Directive
- Resource limitations (human and financial)
- Technical and scientific base not adequately developed
- High level of co-ordination required between many government departments and state agencies

Article 3. River Basin Districts

- M.S. identify river basins and assign to RBD
- RBD to include associated groundwaters and coastal waters
- M.S. identify Competent Authorities for RBDs

Article 4. Environmental Objectives

M.S. shall aim to achieve the objective of:

- Good Surface Water Status
- i.e. both ecological and chemical status are good

Article 4. Env. Objectives (Contd.)

- Achieve Good Groundwater Status
- Comply with any standards and objectives for Protected areas
  Provision for extensions and less stringent objectives
Good Surface Water Status =

- Good Ecological+Chemical
  - Ecological ~ Biological
  - Biological ~ Hydrological and Chemical

**Article 5. Characteristics of RBDs**

- Analysis of Characteristics
- Review of Impacts
- Economic Analysis
- To be completed by 2004

**Surface Water Characterisation**

- Ecological status determined on the basis of biological, hydromorphological and physicochemical elements
- Type-specific reference conditions for each of above elements to be established for each surface water body type, representing values consistent with 'high ecological status'
- Reference conditions serve as 'yardstick' against which water status is determined

**Groundwater Characterisation**

- To include: location and boundaries of groundwater bodies, pressures (diffuse and point source pollution, abstraction), general character of overlying strata
- Further characterisation required for groundwater bodies 'at risk': geological and hydrogeological characteristics, superficial deposits and soils, associated surface water systems, water exchange with surface waters, long-term annual rate of recharge, chemical composition

**Art 6 Protected Areas**

Establish register of:
- Abstraction of drinking water
- FWF and shellfish areas
- Bathing areas
- Sensitive areas (UWW and NO3)
- Habitats and species, Natura 2000 etc.
Article 7
Abstraction of Drinking Water

- Identify ≥ 10 m³/day
- Monitor > 100 m³/day
- Comply with objectives/standards etc.

Article 8
Monitoring/Annex V

M.S. shall provide an overview of water status by monitoring:

- for surface waters - rate of flow, ecological and chemical status
- for groundwaters - chemical and quantitative status

Article 9
Recovery of Costs

- Take account of the Principle of Recovery of Costs
- In accordance with the Polluter Pays Principle
- Have regard to Social/Environmental/Economic effects etc.

Article 10
Combined Approach

- Apply:
  - BAT or Relevant ELVs, or
  - BEP as set out in: NO3, UWW, IPPC, art. 16 and other Directives

Article 11
Programme of Measures

For each RBD:

1. Basic Measures:
   - EC legislation for the protection of water:
     - Nitrates
     - Drinking Water
     - IPPC
     - Sewage sludge
     - Birds and habitats
   - Bathing Water
   - UWWT
   - Dangerous substance
   - EL A
   - Seveso and PPP

(Contd.)

- Measures to implement Art.9 (Costs) and Art.7 (Abstraction)
- Prior authorisation and control of abstraction/impoundment
- Control of point and diffuse discharges
- Prohibit direct discharges to g-waters etc. etc.
Article 13
River Basin Management Plans

Description:
A general description of the characteristics of the RBD

Summary of Pressures and Impacts:
- Point sources
- Diffuse sources and land use
- Pressures on Quantitative Status
- Other Impacts

Map:
- Protected Areas
- Monitoring Network
- Status of:
  - Surface Waters
  - Groundwaters
  - Protected Areas

List:
- Competent Authorities and Environmental Objectives
- Economic Analysis
- Summary of:
  - Programme of Measures and Public Consultation
  - Etc, Etc

Article 14
Public Information and Consultation

- Encourage active involvement of all interested parties
- Publish work programme 1 year before plan period
- Publish overview of main issues 2 years before plan
- Publish draft RBMP for comment at least one year before plan period
- Allow 6 months for comments

Article 16
Strategies against Pollution (Priority Substances)

Cion shall submit Proposals for:
- Priority list of substances
- Control of sources, Point and Diffuse, by product control/ELVs
- EQSs for surface waters, sediment/biota

In absence of agreement, M.S. shall establish measures and standards
Timetable summary

YEAR

0 adoption / enter into force
1 transpose / identify RBDs
2 RBD analysis
3 monitoring programmes
4 publish RBMP
5 programme of measures and “combined approach” operational
6 achieve art. 4 objectives

DELG Supported Initiatives

- Support for local authorities in the establishment of RBD projects as a step towards implementation of the WFD (Guidelines for the Establishment of RBMS, DELG July 2000)
- EPA study of organisational/ resource needs
- EPA pilot studies to establish monitoring methodologies for the ecological assessment of Irish rivers and lakes (ERTDI Research Programme 2000-2006)

RBD Projects - Opportunities

- Promote water management (by local authorities) on the basis of RBDs
- Strengthen tools available to local authorities in the area of water monitoring and management
- Improved data handling, management and reporting
- Potential for improved efficiencies in the delivery of environmental management services by local authorities
- Address significant ‘information gaps’ (e.g., groundwater)
- Address water management in a co-ordinated and systematic manner
- Potential for improved inter-agency and cross sectoral cooperation in the delivery of water quality objectives

National Co-ordination

- Need to clarify technical requirements for the ‘characterisation’ of all waters
- Co-ordination of Government Departments and State agencies (DELG, LAs, DMNR/CFB, EPA, Dúchas, OPW, GSI, Marine Institute, etc.) for development of methodologies and implementation of same
- Establish agreed ‘work plans’ for delivery of products within WFD timeframe
- Ensure that RBMPs reflect national policy and national programmes of measures