NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Environmental Health Section

219

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May 24, 2000

USDA Forest Service
Content Analysis Enterprise Team
Attn: UFP
Building 2, Suite 295
5500 Amelia Earhart Drive
Salt Lake City, UT 84116

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Proposed Unified Federal Policy for Ensuring a Watershed Approach to Federal Land and Resource Management. The proposed policy describes the process federal agencies will use to reduce water pollution from federal activities and foster a unified, watershed-based approach to land and resource management.

The goals and guiding principles identified in the policy provide a very good framework to approach the management of federal lands, resources, and facilities. While we recognize federal agencies must operate within their statutory and budgetary authorities, sufficient resources must be allocated to this effort to be successful. The policy indicates that you propose many process related steps. These include:

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1) common science-based approach to watershed assessment

2) consistent procedures for delineating, assessing, and classifying watersheds
   a) interagency guidelines for watershed delineations
   b) watershed assessment procedures
   c) framework for classifying the condition of watersheds

3) develop schedules for assessments in priority watersheds

4) develop formal agreements with States, Tribes, and local governments

While these steps may be necessary to be consistent across the agencies, they must be completed in a timely fashion so the actual assessments and improvements to water quality can occur.

Many states and local governments are engaged now in watershed management activities. The policy should have a much greater tie-in with those initiatives. The federal agencies need to be responsive to state and local priority watershed projects

and the ranking of those priorities within each state. Federal agencies must also respond quickly to implement best management practices and management strategies that are identified in watershed plans.

We look forward to working with all the federal agencies in management and protection of the quality of our water resources. This proposed policy should assist in that effort if the resources are provided to implement it.

Sincerely,

Francis J. Schwindt, Chief
Environmental Health Section

FJS:cc

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