

Growth Potential and Planning

Land use and management can define the impacts to water quality in relation to point and nonpoint sources. Assessing the potential for an area to expand and grow allows for water quality planning to occur and, if appropriate, increased monitoring for potential impairment of water quality. Indicators used to predict growth potential include water and sewer service, road and highway accessibility, and population trends. These indicators and others were used as tools to determine areas having the greatest potential for impacts to water quality as a result of development.

Watershed boundaries extend along topographic ridges and drain surrounding surface waters. Roads are commonly built along ridge tops with the best drainage conditions. Cities often develop in proximity to ridges as a result of their plateau terrain. It is not uncommon, then, to find cities or road corridors located along watershed boundaries, and thus influencing or impacting several watersheds. SCDHEC's Strategic Plan for 2005-2010 acknowledges that growth issues are best handled at the local government level. SCDHEC's role is to work with local governments and communities to help them understand the importance of planning for smart growth: buffers, greenspaces, mass transit, subdivision and roadway planning, bike paths and bike lanes, and park and ride lots. SCDHEC can also provide assistance in helping local entities access information and provide consultation on technical issues such as the establishment of buffers and watershed stormwater planning. Many counties lack county wide zoning ordinances; therefore, there is little local regulatory power to influence the direction or magnitude of regional growth. The majority of municipalities have zoning ordinances in place; however, much of the growth takes place just outside the municipal boundaries, where infrastructure is inadequate. Section 208 of the Clean Water Act serves to encourage and facilitate the development and implementation of areawide waste treatment management plans. South Carolina's water quality management plans support consolidation of wastewater treatment facilities into larger regional systems.