



# **Update on CWA § 319(h) NPS Grant Program Changes**

## **EPA Region 6 NPS Program**

Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtable

July 26, 2012



# Update on CWA § 319(h) NPS Grant Program Changes

- GAO's Findings
- Anticipated Changes to NPS Program
- Schedule



## National Audit and Study of NPS Program

- Congress' audit of NPS program to assess effectiveness; Government Accountability Office (GAO) report was released on July 2

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-335>

- \$1.2 billion in 319(h) awarded to fund 5,800 projects from 2004-2010
- 28% of those projects did not achieve all intended objectives
- Project challenges could have been mitigated through better project scoping and selection



# Key Findings

- Improve EPA oversight
- Consider additional program measures
- Select effective projects
- Coordinate with USDA's EQIP Program



# Improve EPA Oversight

- Not all Regions required updated NPS Management Programs
- Regions should review project selection criteria and annual work plans
- Select projects that have greatest likelihood of effective implementation and tangible water quality results

**GAO Recommends Executive Action:** HQ issue specific guidance to Regions on how to conduct program oversight to ensure projects have greatest likelihood of being effective



# Additional Measures of Effectiveness

- EPA's two primary program measures may not fully demonstrate program achievements
  - 1) Loading reductions
  - 2) Improvement in water bodies identified in 303(d) lists of program effectiveness may not fully show achievements



# Additional Measures of Effectiveness

- States reported inherent limitations with the two measures
  - Projects likely to yield large loading reductions may not be the most important in addressing NPS problems
  - Emphasis on restoration v. protection may sometimes be limiting returns on investment
- **GAO Recommends Executive Action:** emphasize additional measures that: 1) reflect the overall health of targeted water bodies; and 2) focus on protecting high-quality water bodies where appropriate.



## Select Effective Projects

- Challenges with third-party participation and projects not clearly linked to water quality results
  - Indirect approaches [such as outreach and education] are not always linked to water quality results
  - Reliance on voluntary participation may lead to less effective practices to ensure sufficient landowner participation
- **GAO Recommends:** States use more rigorous project selection processes, and Regions become more involved in determining criteria and reviewing work scopes.





## Coordinate with EQIP Program

- Some EQIP practices potentially conflict with 319; and can adversely affect water quality without the proper suite of companion practices:
  - 319 may have sometimes funded conservation practices without all of the proper companion practices
  - EQIP data is aggregated so effectiveness of mitigation measures cannot be determined
- **GAO Recommends Executive Action:** NRCS review field data to determine extent that mitigation measures are implemented when nutrient management plans are not in use, particularly in 319 funded watersheds. EPA should improve collaboration with USDA



# Proposed Program Enhancements

- Issue draft revised 319 guidelines by fall of 2012
- Use Satisfactory Progress and 319 NPS Program Plan Updates to strengthen program and accountability
  - 50% of outdated plans revised by 2013
- Improve Program Management through better tracking of funds and outcomes
  - At least 50% of funds to watershed implementation



# Proposed Program Enhancements

- Increase Leveraging of CWSRF and other state funding
- Develop additional Measures of Success
- Improve Partnership and Collaboration with Federal Agencies -USDA and others



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