

2.0 BASIN MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE TOMBIGBEE RIVER

This basin management plan for the Tombigbee River Basin has been developed to advance the mission of the Alabama Clean Water Partnership whose members are committed to *restoring, maintaining, and protecting the waterways of the State of Alabama*. It is the first plan of its kind for this basin but it parallels previous basin planning efforts completed and underway for other basins of the state. Two basic goals have guided its development, these two goals are: ***1) Educate readers about nonpoint source pollution in the Tombigbee Basin and how it can be effectively managed and, 2) Serve individuals and organizations working on the management of the Tombigbee River Basin to coordinate their activities.***

This document is one piece of a very large and complex puzzle that consists of related studies and plans that have focused on the management of the of the Tombigbee River Basin. And, like all puzzle pieces, this piece or plan should tell us enough about the rest of the pieces so that we can fit it into place. Therefore, the plan was built upon the results of previous efforts and was developed to meet the following objectives:

- identify and characterize pollution sources
- estimate pollutant load reductions
- describe nonpoint source pollution control measures
- estimate technical and financial assistance needs to implement recommendations
- increase public awareness of watershed issues
- schedule pollution control management measures
- describe plan milestones
- identify monitoring strategies

The development of this basin management plan was highlighted by a process where people met and discussed issues about Alabama's waters and their watersheds. The discussions focused on how to better understand how we impact our waters and to develop guidelines for ourselves to decrease the impacts we have on them by 1) encouraging the positive, responsible things we are already doing to protect Alabama's waters and 2) informing each other and promoting change of the behaviors and actions that have a negative impact on our environment,

especially water quality. In this regard, the basin management plan reflects our knowledge about the waters and to state how we intend to manage them into the future.

This basin management plan has a few basic ingredients. It contains information and data that describes the river and the basin around it. The plan explains water quality issues in the watershed. And, most importantly, it proposes recommendations for managing these issues. This written document becomes a central source of information about the basin that educates people and enables them to make informed choices about their activities as they relate to impacts on Alabama's waters. In this regard, this plan strives to influence the way people act in a way that promotes the stewardship of Alabama's waters.

2.1 Scope of the Tombigbee River Basin Management Plan

The geographic scope of this basin management plan includes the areas associated with the mainstem and all tributaries of the Tombigbee River including all or parts of 31 counties in Alabama. The final basin management plan for the Tombigbee River Basin will include two (2) subbasin project components: 1) Upper Tombigbee Watershed Management Plan, and 2) Lower Tombigbee Watershed Management Plan. Project coordination and basin planning in the Upper Tombigbee River Basin will include information and input from watershed stakeholders from the State of Mississippi. The plan does not include basin management recommendations for the State of Mississippi because water quality plans exist for the Tombigbee River in that state. However, this plan will mention these documents and discuss issues of *inter*-state coordination of water quality and natural resource management for Alabama and Mississippi.

2.2 Alabama Clean Water Partnership (ACWP)

Because the plan is focused on people, it must be created by people, especially those individuals that have a great stake in the process. We call these people *stakeholders*. In Alabama, there is a collaborative setting that brings stakeholders together in a partnership for the management of the State's waters. Some stakeholders attend partnership meetings for individual reasons and others come to represent the interests of businesses and organizations. This working partnership is called the Alabama Clean Water Partnership (ACWP).

The ACWP is a statewide nonprofit organization that incorporated in 2001. Guided by a Board of Directors and a Statewide Coordinator, it is a coalition of public and private individuals, companies, organizations and governing bodies that work together to manage water resources and aquatic ecosystems for Alabama. The purpose of the ACWP is to bring together many diverse groups in order to coordinate their efforts, to share information, to plan management activities and to allocate resources. The ACWP was organized to allow these diverse interests to develop, support, and coordinate efforts that aim to restore, maintain, and protect the waterways of Alabama. ACWP Partners enjoy, 1) improved communication, 2) data and information sharing and consolidation, 3) opportunities for improved coordination, and 4) opportunities for enhanced collaboration.

Under the auspices of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, USEPA, and private interests, the ACWP has successfully spearheaded the basin management planning effort for the rivers of Alabama. By adopting the “basin” or “watershed” approach to the management of

Major River Basins Represented in the Alabama Clean Water Partnership	
Alabama - Tombigbee	Conecuh-Sepulga
Black Warrior	Coosa
Cahaba	Coastal
Chattahoochee-Chipola	Tallapoosa
Choctawhatchee-Pea-Yellow	Tennessee

water quality issues, constituencies are invited to participate on behalf of their respective basins and subbasins. The goal of this process is to address water quality issues at the smallest scale possible because water quality problems – especially nonpoint source pollution problems – are the culmination of innumerable small pollution inputs and, therefore, require a widespread educational response to produce cumulative and positive results.

2.3 Alabama-Tombigbee CWP Steering Committee

The ACWP is made up of 10 basin groups representing 11 major river basins of the State.⁸ For each basin, a Steering Committee has been formed consisting of representatives from the general public, agricultural business, major industries, governmental agencies, private organizations and universities. The Alabama/Tombigbee Clean Water Partnership Steering Committee (a.k.a. AlaTom Steering Committee) is one of these committees. Over 70 people

⁸ There is currently one steering committee for both the Alabama River and Tombigbee River basins because of limited funding to the ACWP. Each basin would have its own steering committee if funding were available.

representing counties throughout the two basins make up this committee. Its primary purpose is to serve as a coordinating body for stakeholders from the Alabama and Tombigbee River basins. The Committee meets on a quarterly basis in Montgomery. The membership of the Steering Committee is summarized below.

Membership of the Alabama-Tombigbee Steering Committee	
Alabama Department of Economic Affairs – Office of Water Resources	Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Council
Alabama Clean Water Partnership	CH2M Hill
Alabama Coastal Foundation	City of Montgomery
Alabama Department of Environmental Management	Coosa Alabama River Improvement Association
Alabama Dept. of Public Health	Dee River Ranch
ALFA	Georgia-Pacific
Alabama Forestry Commission	Gulf States Paper
Alabama Home Builders Association	Hand Arendall/Alabama Coastal Foundation
Alabama Legacy	MS Department of Environmental Quality
Alabama Power Corporation	Olin
Alabama Pulp and Paper Council	Plum Creek Watershed Association
Alabama River Pulp	Rayonier, Inc
Alabama Rivers Alliance	Tenn-Tom Water Development Authority
Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee	The Nature Conservancy
Alabama Water Watch	The Water Works and Sanitary Sewer Board of the City of Montgomery
Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission	Tombigbee Resource Conservation & Development Council
	University of South Alabama Foundation
Auburn University	University of West Alabama
Boise Cascade	United States Army Corps of Engineers
Business Council of Alabama	United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service
Capital Ideas	United States Geological Survey

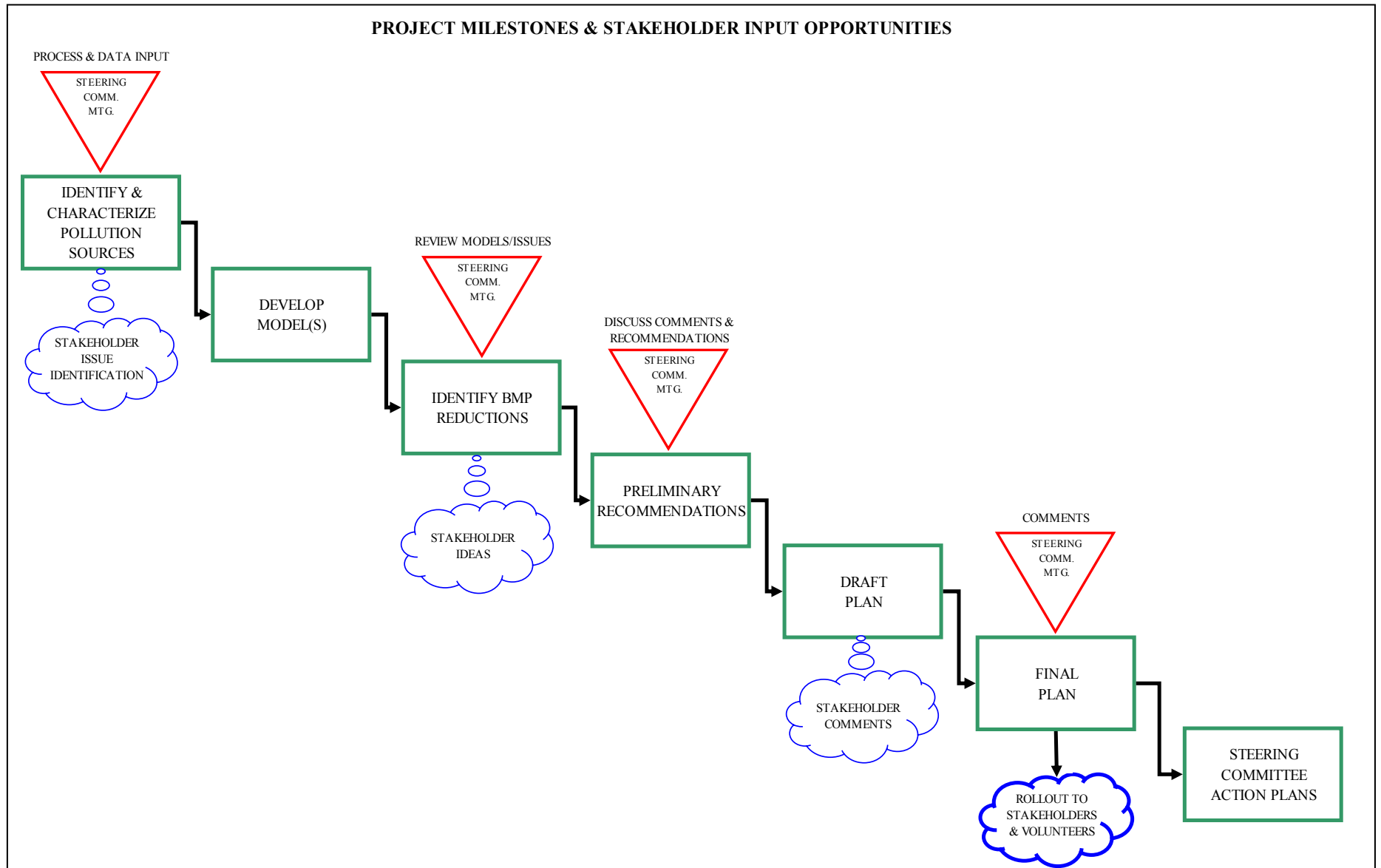
2.4 Alabama and Tombigbee River Subbasin Stakeholder Groups and their Participation in the Planning Process

A stakeholder outreach and participation component was a crucial element to the two basin management planning efforts. Its primary purpose was to reach *local* stakeholders that may not have participated in the quarterly meetings of the AlaTom Steering Committee in order to gather their input on the basin management plans. Local stakeholders are property owners, local resource managers, and representatives of local businesses, industry, municipal government, and/or civic organizations with an understanding of the basin on a smaller, more intimate, or grassroots perspective. Participation of local stakeholders constitutes a *community-based*

approach to developing the plans because it uses their local knowledge of the watershed to identify water quality issues and potential management solutions.

An illustration of how stakeholder participation was integrated with the development of the Alabama and Tombigbee Basin Management Plans is provided as Figure 1 below. At defined stages in the plan development timeline (blue-colored symbols), stakeholders were given the opportunity to participate in the basin management planning process. Particular attention and energy was focused on stakeholder comments related to known water quality issues (*i.e.*, water quality issues as defined by the State's 305(b), 303(d) and/or TMDL Process) and any other water quality concerns or issues they had. In terms of scale, basin management issues are discussed from a basin level down to the associated watersheds and sub-watersheds, where applicable.

Figure 2.3. Stakeholder Input Opportunities for the Basin Management Plans



The stakeholder and public participation program for the basin management planning effort was designed to build on past efforts of the ACWP and the AlaTom Steering Committee. Its main objectives are: 1) to support the development of the Alabama and Tombigbee Basin Management Plans and, 2) to engage a diverse population of stakeholders with interest in participating in the basin management planning process and the Alabama Clean Water Partnership. The creators of the stakeholder and public participation program were Kleinschmidt Associates and the Alabama Pulp and Paper Council (APPCO), which is a founding partner in the ACWP and has a history of sponsoring efforts to manage the Alabama and Tombigbee.

APPCO has made significant investments in the ACWP efforts to organize stakeholders in the two basins. In fact, an APPCO representative (Mr. Roy McAuley) served as the first chairman of the ACWP Board of Directors and AlaTom Steering Committee. It also has hired a Basin Facilitator to coordinate subbasin stakeholder groups and to act as liaison between these groups and the Steering Committee. The current facilitator, Mrs. Ashley Henderson, serves as the lead coordinator for APPCO's involvement in facilitating stakeholder input throughout the basins. The facilitator role has a broad range of outreach and coordination duties that make the position an essential element of the public participation component. Below is an excerpt from the job description of the Basin Facilitator:

Excerpt from the Current Job Description of the ACWP Basin Facilitators

1. Conduct stakeholder/public outreach concerning watershed water quality needs based on Alabama's Section 303(d) list;
2. Coordinate efforts to identify sources of existing data (including water quality, biology, and habitat, as available) for review, ongoing monitoring efforts, and future monitoring data needs;
3. Promote the sharing of data with stakeholders and with ADEM through the Steering Committee, and report data findings as appropriate;
4. Work with Steering Committee to solicit, locate, promote/recommend corrective action projects directly through others;
5. Coordinate efforts of the Steering Committee to obtain funding and prioritize the use of available funds for corrective action projects within the basin as necessary;
6. Assist or facilitate corrective actions completion as necessary;
7. Report progress quarterly to ADEM and the Alabama Clean Water Partnership (ACWP) State Facilitator utilizing a generic format provided by the Department;
8. Assist with development of Watershed-Based Plans and TMDL implementation where applicable;
9. Promote and support the Nonpoint Source Education of Municipal Officials (NEMO) activities;
10. Track and report volunteer and in-kind contributions for monitoring of total project value.

The first ACWP subbasin stakeholder group meeting in the Tombigbee River Basin was organized by APPCO. This meeting of the Upper Tombigbee Subbasin Group met on July 1,

2003 in Aliceville, Alabama, and was well-attended. In addition to this meeting, efforts were made to establish stakeholder contact lists for the other subbasins in the Alabama and Tombigbee River basins. These exploratory efforts helped the establishment of the stakeholder participation program conducted in support of the basin management plans.

At the onset of the Alabama – Tombigbee Basin Management Planning Process in the fall of 2003, APPCO, Kleinschmidt Associates and the AlaTom Steering Committee agreed to implement a collaborative stakeholder process that built on current efforts. This process was strategically designed so that the basin management planning process would be a beacon to attract participants and local sponsors to form subbasin groups and become involved in the process. The hope was to “jump start” earlier efforts to create a sustainable public participation program for the Alabama and Tombigbee River Basins.

Stakeholder groups were organized by subbasin or a combination of subbasins, as follows: Upper Tombigbee, Lower Tombigbee/Lower Alabama, Upper Alabama/Catoma Creek, Middle Alabama, and Middle Tombigbee. Even though the size of the project area proved to be a substantial challenge to attracting stakeholders to periodic subbasin meetings to discuss the basin management plans, limited time and funding kept the project team from organizing stakeholder meetings on a smaller scale, *i.e.*, county, watershed, town. Long travel distances within these basins were a practical hurdle for stakeholders to attend stakeholder meetings. For instance, the two basins combined encompass almost a quarter of the area of the entire State of Alabama: Total Area of the Alabama and Tombigbee Basins = 19,779 square miles versus the Total Area of Alabama = 52,423 sq. miles, including over 6,000 sq. miles and 22 counties in Mississippi).

APPCO and Kleinschmidt Associates began a “pilot” program for the subbasin stakeholder outreach process in January 2004. Three meetings were arranged by APPCO to introduce stakeholders and the AlaTom Steering Committee to the basin planning process and to solicit input about current water quality issues in each basin. The stakeholder participation program began with an ‘Upper Tombigbee Stakeholder Group’ meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2004 in Carrollton, Alabama.⁹ The AlaTom Steering Committee met on the following day and

⁹ Due to inclement weather, Kleinschmidt Associates was not able to attend the meeting in Carrollton and Allison Newell Jenkins, ACWP Executive Director, was kind enough to fill in for him.

discussed basin management issues. And, the ‘Lower Alabama/Lower Tombigbee Stakeholder Group’ met on Thursday, January 29, 2004 in Grove Hill, AL. Shortly after these meetings, a special Alabama-Tombigbee Stakeholder Group meeting was organized and held during WaterQuest 2004 in Birmingham on February 10, 2004.

In the Alabama and Tombigbee Basins, the core group of local or subbasin stakeholders were recruited from organizations participating in the ACWP and the AlaTom Steering Committee. Other stakeholders from local organizations (*e.g.*, chambers of commerce, economic development associations) and watershed groups were also invited to attend. Lastly, local citizen activists, such as water quality monitors, are recognized as important sources of local input and were encouraged to attend. In the Tombigbee River Basin, water quality volunteers are coordinated by AWWA and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Historically, the following groups conducted water quality monitoring in the basin: East Mississippi Community College, Hamilton High School, Jackson High School, Smith Lake Environmental Preservation Committee, Livingston University, Sumter County High School, and the University of West Alabama.

In March of 2004, the first phase of the stakeholder participation program was launched. During the week of March 15, 2004, four subbasin stakeholder meetings were organized by the Basin Facilitator and her sponsoring organization, the Alabama Pulp and Paper Council. The meetings’ agendas included an introductory and educational component to familiarize participants to the state ACWP and the basin management planning process. The remainder of the agenda included a facilitated discussion of water quality issues in order to gain direct input from participants about local watershed concerns.

Participants at the subbasin meetings received presentations on current water quality issues in their basin, subbasin and watersheds and they were asked to respond with questions and to engage in facilitated discussions. In some instances, “around the room” discussions were staged so that everyone in the audience was given an opportunity to introduce themselves, speak about where they live, their interest in participating in the group and most importantly, what concerns they had about the rivers and tributaries of their community. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on problems they perceived in the watershed and to suggest possible

remedies for these issues. These sessions allowed for direct input from watershed stakeholders that wished to be a part of the basin management planning process. This stakeholder input is presented in Section 6.2 of this plan.

<i>Alabama Tombigbee River Subbasin Stakeholder Groups Meetings, March 16 – 18, 2004</i>
Upper Tombigbee Tuesday, March 16, 2004 at 6:00 p.m., Cooperative Extension Bldg in Carrollton, AL
Upper Alabama – Catoma Creek Watershed Wednesday, March 17, 2004 at 12:00 p.m. at the Montgomery County, Department of Health Auditorium
Middle Tombigbee Thursday, March 18, 2004 at 12:00 p.m., UWA On-Site Wastewater Demonstration Training Center, Livingston, AL
Lower Alabama/Lower Tombigbee Thursday, March 18, 2004 at 6:00 p.m., ALFA Building, Grove Hill, AL