

## **A Strategic Approach to Assessing the State of a Watershed**

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**Abstract.** A watershed assessment is essential for evaluating watershed health and ecosystem resilience. Understanding the current state of the watershed is one method for maintaining and improving the nation's watersheds. A watershed assessment provides information needed to understand the current conditions based on a set of indicators. For example, indicators may include designated uses, water quality, water pollutants and stressors, and potential decline. A "state of the watershed" template has been developed to provide guidance in conducting watershed assessments that are adaptable to watersheds across the nation. A watershed assessment will enable resource managers to make better-informed and effective decisions, identify data gaps, discover and examine uncertainty in existing projects, and make recommendations for future studies. A consistent approach to assessing the state of watersheds will allow for comparisons between watersheds, identification of management strategies, and advancement in the understanding of watershed systems.

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