

Environmental Alert



Photo courtesy of <https://dep.nj.gov/wlm/watershed/>.

NJDEP's Watershed Improvement Plan: The Three Phases of Watershed Improvement Compliance

The release of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP's) January 1, 2023 Tier A Municipal Stormwater General Permit (GP) renewal alerted our municipalities of new Watershed Improvement Plan (WIP) requirements, the first of which is coming due on January 1, 2026. There are three phases to the WIP and we've summarized the main points for each phase below for clarity for our members.

Background

During the current five-year Tier A Municipal Stormwater GP cycle, New Jersey municipalities are required to develop WIPs to ultimately improve water quality and reduce flooding across the State of New Jersey. The WIP will enable each municipality to identify specific areas in which improvements can be made to reduce their contribution of pollutants to all receiving waters within (and bordering) the municipality.

Phase 1 – Watershed Inventory Report

Initially, each municipality must complete a stormwater inventory and analyze several of its features for the first phase of this endeavor, the Watershed Inventory Report. Our municipalities must submit this data to the NJDEP, in addition to the MS4 Infrastructure Map, by January 1, 2026. A template for the Watershed Inventory Report has been provided by the NJDEP on their Municipal Stormwater Regulation Program webpage; and the template itself includes a comprehensive list of the required data and the source for each respective data set, some of which are acquired directly from the NJDEP's publicly available data or from the municipality's own MS4 Infrastructure Map. Datasets which must be acquired from various other sources (and therefore must be submitted electronically) are as follows. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list, and the complete list of requirements can be found at link for the Watershed Inventory Report template, provided below:

Required Data	Data Source
Drainage area for each permittee owned/operated outfall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topography ArcGIS Solutions/ArcHydro
All stormwater interconnections from the permittee's MS4 system into another entities' storm or sanitary sewer system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MS4 to MS4 interconnections required in MS4 Infrastructure Map, private interconnection(s) needed
The drainage area for each interconnection into another entity's storm or sanitary sewer system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topography ArcGIS Solutions/ArcHydro
All stormwater interconnections into the permittee's system from another entity's storm sewer system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MS4 to MS4 interconnections required in MS4 Infrastructure Map, private interconnection(s) needed
Location and ownership of all stormwater infrastructure not owned or operated by the permittee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> H&H Database

Phase 2 – Watershed Assessment Report

The Watershed Assessment Report (due January 1, 2027) will analyze the data collected during the first phase and put a spotlight on potential improvement projects which can be initiated to tackle any concerns in Phase 1. This Report is also required to include, but is not limited to, an estimation of the percent reduction of the current Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) loading, an announcement of a 60-day public comment period, an estimation of funding for the selected projects, and a proposed schedule.

Phase 3 – Watershed Improvement Plan

In the final phase, municipalities are expected to finalize their WIP (due December 1, 2027), which will serve to confirm which of the projects identified in Phase 2 will be initiated. The WIP will also include a reiteration of proposed projects' details, such as their locations, and how they are expected to improve water quality (in addition to what other regulatory requirements to which the proposed work may be subject). Further, a summary of public comments and dates for upcoming public information sessions must be included, along with a proposed implementation schedule, costs, and potential impacts on overburdened communities.

Templates for the Watershed Assessment Report and Watershed Improvement Plan will be made available on the NJDEP Watershed Improvement Plan webpage, once complete.

Please note that a funding program is available from the NJDEP that may assist our municipalities in developing their respective Watershed Improvement Plans. A link to the Rutgers University New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station's Water Resources Program can be found [here](#).

Please visit NJDEP's website for more information or assistance. We recommend the following pages:

[NJDEP Tier A MS4 Stormwater Permit Webpage](#)

[NJDEP Watershed Improvement Plan Webpage](#)

[WIP Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Phase 1 – Watershed Inventory Report Template](#)

[New Jersey Watershed Evaluation Tool \(NJ-WET\)](#)

[NJDEP Open Data](#)

[MS4 WIP Guidance Webpage](#)

[TMDL Lookup Tool](#)

[New Jersey's Integrated Water Quality Assessment Reports – 303\(d\) List](#)

[New Jersey Environmental Justice Mapping, Assessment, and Protection Tool \(EJMAP\)](#)

[H&H Database](#)

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If you need a more detailed explanation of this topic or need assistance in interpreting how it may impact your site, the EJIF suggests that you contact the EJIF environmental consultants for further information.

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