

Examples of Engaging Partners and the Public in TMDL Development and Implementation

**2025 NATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP ON
WATER QUALITY DATA, ASSESSMENT, AND PLANS**

BUILDING CAPACITY AND EFFICIENCY THROUGH SHARED EXPERIENCE

***June 2, 2025
Kevin Kirsch***

Codified Public Participation Requirements

NR 212.77 Public Participation.

- (1) The department shall conduct an informational public hearing and provide an opportunity for the public to comment on a proposed TMDL before the TMDL is submitted to EPA for approval. The minimum time period for written comments shall be 30 days from the date of public notice of a TMDL. The department shall post notice of a proposed TMDL on the department's website.
- (2) Once a TMDL is approved by EPA, the TMDL is automatically incorporated into all applicable areawide water quality management plans, lake management plans, or remedial action plans.
- (3) The department may not impose a WQBEL based on a TMDL in a permit under s. NR 212.76 (6), until the TMDL has been approved by EPA.
- (4) The department shall provide public notice and provide an opportunity for comment on a calculated WQBEL that is derived from the EPA-approved TMDL during the public notice and comment period on the permit as provided in ch. NR 203 and ch. 283, Stats.

History: CR 15-085: cr. Register August 2016 No. 728, eff. 9-1-16.

TMDL Internal Teams

(Did not always exist)

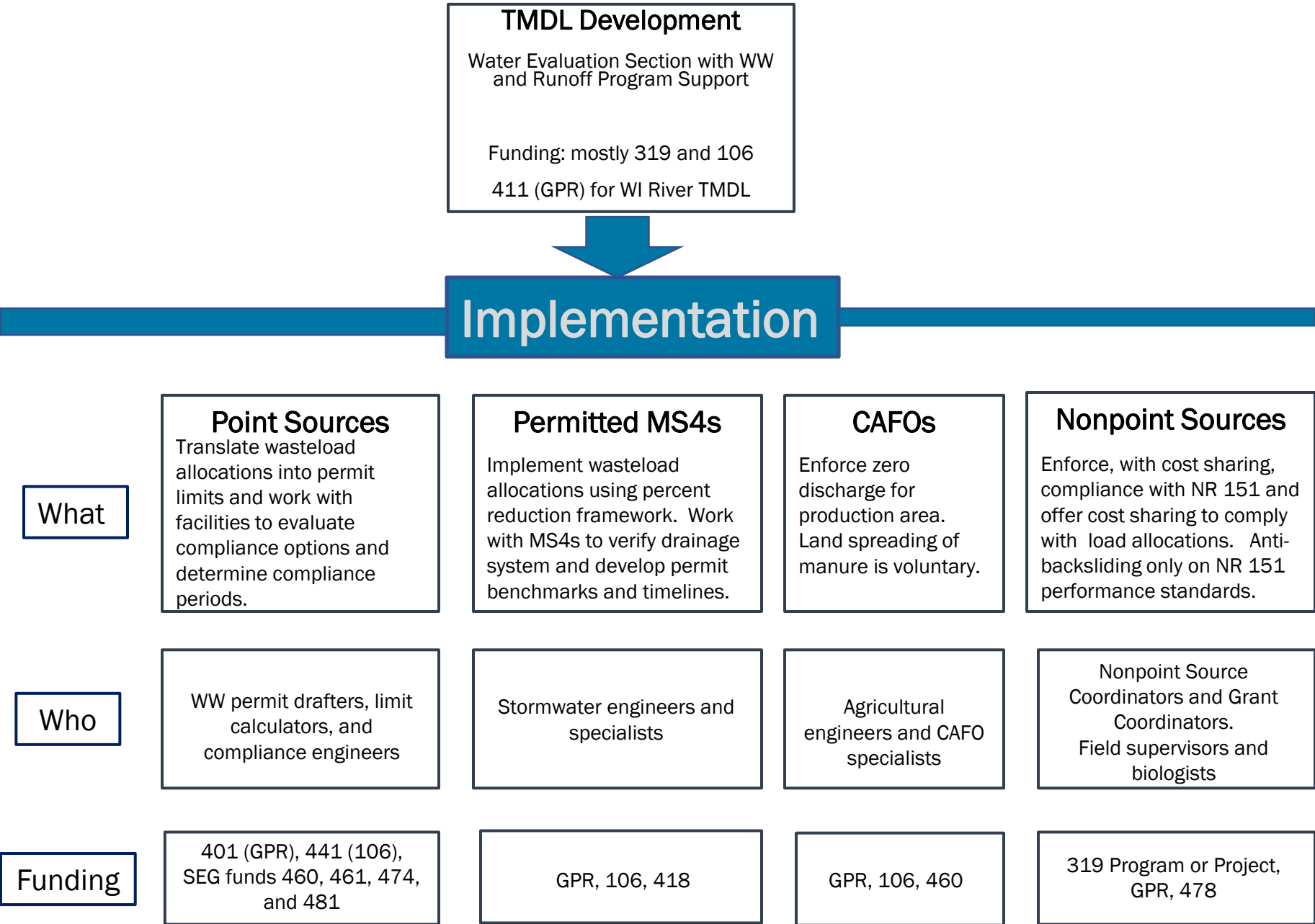
- Project Coordinator(s)/Lead(s)
- Sector Leads:
 - Permitted Stormwater
 - Urban Nonpoint
 - Wastewater
 - Agriculture
 - Monitoring



“A TMDL reveals the skeleton in the closet”

- Dean Maraldo, U.S. EPA

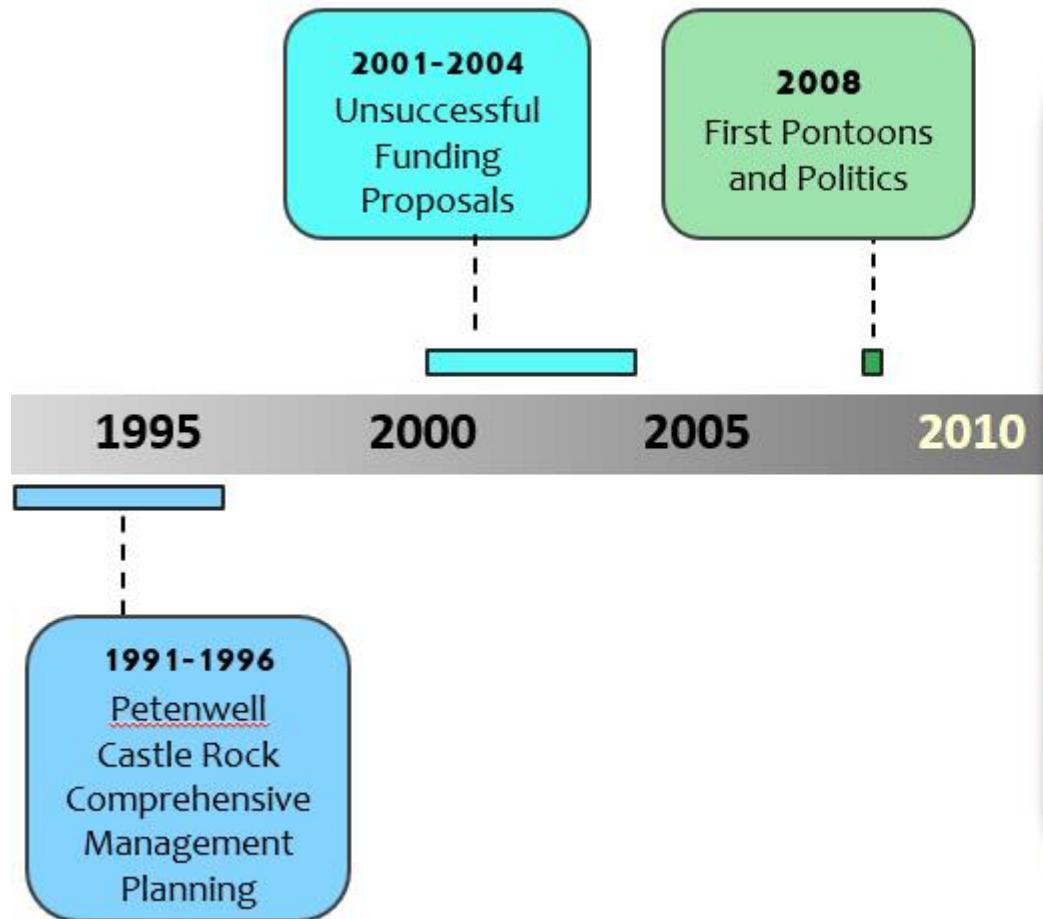
Early TMDLs lacked internal coordination resulting in missed point sources and other issues.



Key TMDL Engagement and Outreach

1. Project Genesis and Setting the Stage
2. TMDL Development
 - Tools and Timelines
 - Stakeholder Meetings at Major Milestones
 - Correspondence and Meetings During Data Collection
 - Draft Allocations and Individual Meetings
 - Multiple Comment Periods
3. TMDL Implementation and Tracking

TMDL Genesis: Stakeholder and Legislative Initiatives

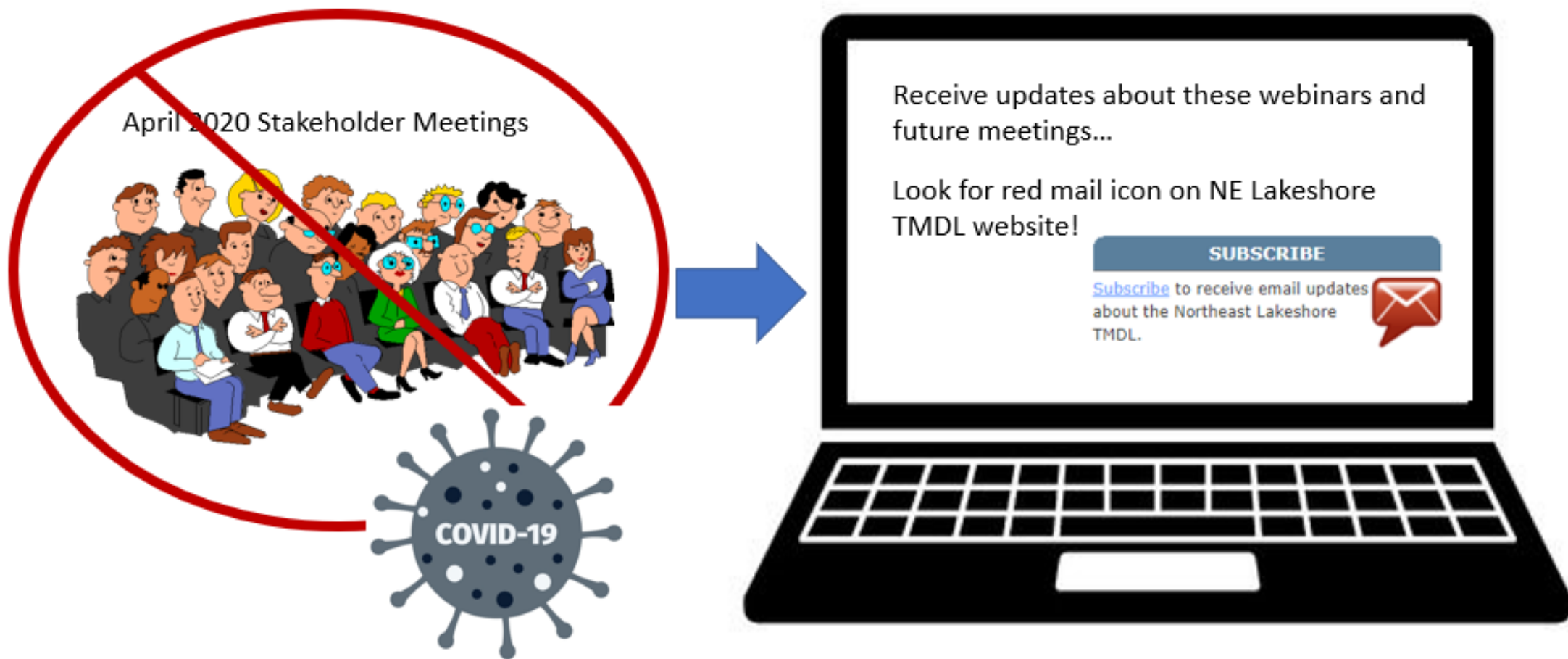


TMDL Genesis: NE Lakeshore TMDL Listening Sessions

- Started with one County Land and Water Conservation Office requesting a presentation on TMDLs.
- Held five listening sessions across the study area attended by Legislative Representatives and State Senators.
- Resulted in funding for monitoring activities, a dedicated project position, and two support staff.



Communicating with Stakeholders



Communicating with Stakeholders

- Migrated to using GovDelivery for all mass communications.
 - Record of receipt.
 - Record of being opened.
 - Record of being forwarded.
- Prior to COVID, most meetings were in person.
- During COVID, all meetings were virtual.
- Post COVID, most meetings are either virtual or a hybrid.

SUBSCRIBE

[Subscribe](#) to receive email updates
about the Northeast Lakeshore
TMDL.



NORTHEAST LAKESHORE TMDL

A FRAMEWORK FOR WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT



South Branch of the Manitowoc River. / Photo Credit: Holly Stegemann, DNR

The DNR, together with many partners throughout the basins, is working to improve the surface water quality of tributaries, streams, rivers and lakes within the Northeast Lakeshore TMDL basins. The Northeast Lakeshore TMDL is focused on addressing surface water quality impairments from phosphorus and total suspended solids. In addition, quantifying nonpoint nitrogen loading is part of the study; however, a TMDL will not be created for nitrogen because

Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)

[Overview](#)

[TMDLs In Development](#)

[Approved TMDLs](#)

[Implementation](#)

[Point Source](#)

[Nonpoint Source](#)

[Map and Projects](#)

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Every TMDL has a website created to help convey information and act as a repository for documents and recorded presentations.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- [Northeast Lakeshore Long-Term Trend River Data \[PDF\]](#)
- Northeast Lakeshore Basin Monitoring
 - [2023 Northeast Lakeshore Volunteer Monitoring Report \[PDF\]](#)
 - [2023 Northeast Lakeshore Volunteer Monitoring Summary \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Interactive Water Quality Data Spreadsheet \[xlsx\]](#)
 - [Northeast Lakeshore Volunteer Monitoring Fact Sheet \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Northeast Lakeshore Volunteer Monitoring Program](#)

APPROVAL BY THE EPA

On Oct. 30, 2023, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved the Northeast Lakeshore TMDL.

- [EPA Approval Letter \[PDF\]](#)
- [EPA Decision Document \[PDF\]](#)
- [Final TMDL Report \[PDF\]](#)

▲ Appendices

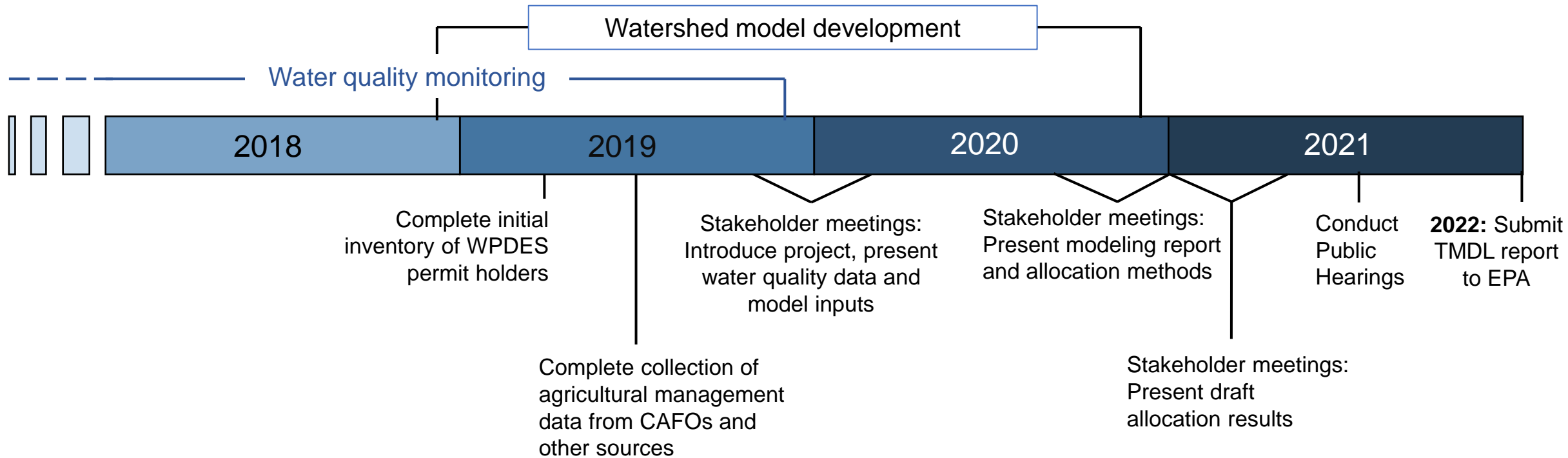
- [Appendix A: Waterbody Impairments Addressed by the TMDL \[PDF\]](#)
- [Appendix B: Subbasins Defined for TMDL Development \[PDF\]](#)
- Appendix C: TMDL Subbasin Land Use and Maps
 - [Appendix C: Kewaunee Total Phosphorus \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Appendix C: Kewaunee Total Suspended Solids \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Appendix C: Manitowoc Total Phosphorus \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Appendix C: Manitowoc Total Suspended Solids \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Appendix C: Sheboygan Total Phosphorus \[PDF\]](#)

The website is updated through the development and implementation process.

During the development phase, emphasis is placed on presentations and documents.

During implementation, the website provides water quality updates and implementation tracking.

Provide Detailed Project Timelines



Moved away from proving exact dates and instead provide general timeline.

Timing of Outreach Meetings

- For the Wisconsin River Basin TMDL, DNR facilitated or participated in numerous workshops looking at both development and implementation issues associated with the TMDL.
- These workshops were prior to the watershed modeling and allocation process. This resulted in a significant drop-off in interest as the modeling process stretched over a year in length.
- We are now much more strategic about the timing and topics of our stakeholder meetings.



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Outreach During Data Collection

- Agricultural Data:
 - County wide surveys sent to Land and Water Conservation Offices
 - Meetings with Producer Groups
- Permitted Wastewater:
 - Ask for flow and discharge data of pollutant of concern
 - Verify outfall locations
- Permitted Stormwater:
 - Ask for storm sewer outfall mapping and municipal boundaries

Draft Allocations and Outreach

- Potential Impacts to Facilities
 - Likely upgrade needed – facility upgrade or variance
 - Maybe upgrade needed – optimization most likely approach
 - No upgrade needed – already meeting the TMDL
- Meet individually with each facility requiring an upgrade.
- Provide a translation of mass allocations into effluent limits.
- Explanation of alternative compliance options such as water quality trading and adaptive management. Check for variance eligibility including the multi-discharger variance for total phosphorus (MDV).

Comments and Response to Comments

“Comments show their cards and provide a roadmap of ways in which the TMDL could be challenged.”

-Jim Curtin, Retired Attorney, U.S. EPA

The number of comment periods DNR holds has increased in subsequent TMDLs.

Initially, only comments received during the official public informational hearing, stipulated in NR 212, were responded to in writing; however, that has expanded.



Comments and Written Response to Comments

Rock River Basin TMDL

Public informational hearing with an additional comment period added.

Wisconsin River TMDL and Milwaukee River Basin TMDL

Two major comment periods: a public comment period on the draft as well as the public informational hearing.

Upper Fox Wolf Basin TMDL

Comment periods held during each development phase.
During the public informational hearing, one stakeholder incorporated by reference all comments submitted during the entire development process.

NE Lakeshore TMDL and Fox-Illinois Basin TMDL

Respond to all comments during each comment period in writing and include as separate appendices in the TMDL report for each comment period.

Written Response to Comments

Upper Fox Wolf Basin TMDL

- Appendix L – Draft Report
 - 25 pages
 - 37 Comments
- Appendix N – Public Informational Hearing
 - 117 Pages
 - 111 Comments

Fox-Illinois River Basin TMDL

- Response to comments on Monitoring Report and Agricultural Surveys
 - 542 Pages (QAPP and Correspondence)
 - 63 Comments
- Response to comments regarding model set-up, calibration, and validation
 - 22 Pages
 - 63 Comments

One consultant is responsible for 90% of the comments.

Development Transition to Implementation

- Webinars for permitted MS4s
- Agricultural Outreach
 - Meetings with Land and Water Conservation Offices
 - Meetings with Producer Led Groups
 - Feed edge-of-field targets, derived from load allocations, into implementation plans.
- Prioritize watersheds for implementation and identify fields with a high potential for pollutant delivery.



CONNECT WITH US

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"WILD WISCONSIN:
OFF THE RECORD"