

# WHERE THE NPDES ENDS: WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT BEYOND THE PERMIT

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The Federal Clean Water Act National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program regulates discharges of pollutants from point sources, which includes stormwater discharge and wastewater discharges from pipes, outlets and other discrete conveyances. The NPDES permitting program does not address nonpoint sources of pollution which transports sediment, nutrients, bacteria, metals, pesticides, organic compounds and other forms of pollution into rivers, lakes, estuaries and wetlands. The wide range of nonpoint sources (e.g., agriculture, mining, silviculture, urban runoff) and the variety of pollutants generated by them create a challenge for their effective control. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) awards a Nonpoint Source (NPS) Implementation Grant to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD). The grant is used to fund eligible projects as described in Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act which support Georgia's NPS Management Program goals and objectives of prevention, control, and/or abatement of nonpoint sources of pollution. USEPA awards the grant annually, which GAEPD uses to administer the program and make funds available to public agencies in Georgia (e.g. cities, counties, regional development centers, local school systems, State colleges and universities, and State agencies). Historically, Georgia has received approximately \$3.5 million each year to address NPS pollution and implement its NPS Management Program. Local governments and project partners have annually contributed approximately \$2.3 million in matching funds to these efforts. During the 2016 calendar year, GAEPD continued to implement statewide water quality improvement projects by administering 49 active Section 319(h) grant contracts that totaled over \$10.8 million in federal funds and \$8.1 million in matching funds or in-kind services. Thirty-six of these projects were funded to external sub-grantees. Project components included Best Management Practice implementation, water quality monitoring, septic repair, Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development, stream restoration, educational outreach, and watershed planning.

*Program reference: 1.8.1*