



TONY KNOWLES
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

October 2, 2002

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 200

I, Tony Knowles, Governor of the State of Alaska, under the authority vested in me by art. III, secs. 1 and 24, of the Alaska Constitution, establish an Alaska's Clean Water Actions (ACWA) policy of unifying and strengthening state natural resource agency efforts to protect, assess, and restore Alaska's waters and aquatic habitat.

PURPOSE AND FINDINGS

Clean, abundant water and healthy aquatic habitat are critical to Alaska's social and economic well-being. Alaska's waters and resources are the backbone of Alaska's economy, from fisheries to tourism. These same resources are the heart of the traditional subsistence lifestyle and are vitally important for nutrition, cultural integrity, spiritual well-being, and the quality of life Alaskans treasure.

Alaska has a tremendous diversity of water resources, including 365,000 miles of rivers and streams, at least 170 million acres of wetlands, more than a million lakes larger than five acres, and over 44,000 miles of coastal shoreline.

Alaskans use approximately 90 million gallons of water each and every day. About 60 million gallons comes from surface waters and 30 million from groundwater.

The vast majority of Alaska's waters are healthy. However, 58 waterbodies have been identified as having localized pollution problems, some of them from multiple sources. Fifty-two of these waterbodies are polluted by run-off from roads, parking lots, construction activities, landfills, failing septic systems, or erosion due to intensive streamside recreation and other community uses.

Alaska must step up and focus its efforts to assess the health of our waters and to maintain vigilant stewardship, as well as act to restore polluted waters.

Alaska's three natural resource agencies--the Departments of Environmental Conservation, Fish and Game, and Natural Resources--and the Division of Governmental Coordination in the Office of the Governor administer various programs to protect water quality, water quantity, and aquatic habitat. Historically, there has been no common understanding of the condition of Alaska's waters, what waterbodies have problems or are at risk of having problems, or how and when the problems can be fixed.

There has been no coordinated approach for the state's resource agencies or others to agree on what constitutes a water problem, how to establish priorities for preventing water problems, and priorities for correcting those problems that exist now.

A statewide prioritization and master plan was needed. The state's natural resource agencies developed ACWA to effectively coordinate state water resource and aquatic habitat programs, to establish water stewardship as a priority, and to ensure the State of Alaska's resources are focused on conservation and, where appropriate, the restoration of Alaska's rivers, lakes, and other waterbodies.

It is in the best interest of Alaska that the natural resource agencies co-manage Alaska's water resources based on a common set of priorities to prevent water and aquatic habitat degradation, and correct existing problems threatening the health of Alaska's waters. Also, each year, local communities, state and federal agencies, private companies, nongovernmental organizations, and individual citizens spend a significant amount of time and money to protect and restore Alaska's streams, lakes, rivers, bays, and inlets. It is in the best interest of Alaska that these efforts also be coordinated and directed to the most important conservation, assessment, and restoration needs of Alaska's waterbodies. ACWA provides that approach.

The goal of ACWA is to preserve Alaska's precious water resources and ensure that they remain drinkable, fishable, swimmable, and workable waters for future generations of Alaskans. ACWA is not a new regulatory program. ACWA is a more efficient, more effective way of meeting the State of Alaska's responsibility as steward of Alaska's water resources. To maintain and enhance Alaska's stewardship, ACWA establishes the means for the relevant state agencies and the public to:

- Direct state resources to waters of greatest need for stewardship, assessment, and restoration.
- Enhance, promote, and encourage local watershed activities on priority waters.
- Assess the health of Alaska's waters using local and scientific information.

AGENCY DIRECTIVES

The Alaska's Clean Water Actions policy is the cornerstone of long-term conservation, assessment, restoration, and overall co-management of Alaska's water resources. Effective administration will ensure the continued and long-term success of ACWA. Therefore, I direct the Departments of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Fish and Game (DF&G), and Natural Resources (DNR) and the Division of Governmental Coordination in the Office of the Governor (DGC) ("the agencies") as follows:

The agencies are directed to coordinate water resource management at both the policy and technical levels. The director of DGC shall chair the ACWA Team. Each natural resource agency will designate an ACWA team member. Each agency may also designate an ACWA coordinator from each department program that addresses water quantity, quality, or aquatic habitat to work with the ACWA team member.

1. The state's natural resource agencies, through the ACWA Team, are directed to jointly categorize waterbodies for monitoring, protection, and restoration and to prioritize and rank the needs of waterbodies within each of the categories. Additional categories (or subsets of these categories) may be included, as established by the ACWA Team.

2. The agencies, through the ACWA Team, are directed to develop and maintain a common ACWA waters database that will:

- a) serve as an inventory and categorize, rank, and determine appropriate next steps for waterbodies,
- b) be kept current by the agencies,
- b) guide agency work plans,
- c) be accessible to agencies and the public, and
- d) produce reports that track progress and show the current status of waterbodies.

3. The agencies, through the ACWA Team, are directed to develop an initial ACWA waterbodies report, identifying waterbodies by condition, needs, and priority ranking (high, medium, or low). In conjunction with the database and report, there will be an open and ongoing solicitation for additional information about the waterbodies in the database, and for information about additional waterbodies that should be added to the database.

4. The agencies, through the ACWA Team, are directed to periodically and jointly evaluate the existing agency stewardship programs authorized under Alaska laws to protect and preserve water quantity, quality, and aquatic habitat. The goal of this is to maximize the collective statewide effectiveness of the state's water resource stewardship programs and to apply resources to the highest needs. The agencies are directed to develop annually an integrated funding proposal for water programs to be included in the governor's budget.

5. In order to achieve ACWA priorities, to correct agency stewardship gaps, and to build local solutions and capacity to solve water problems, the agencies will conduct an annual, joint solicitation for projects to be funded with various "pass-through funding" programs related to water quantity, quality, and aquatic habitat. To the maximum extent possible, funding priorities and project selection criteria will be based on the ACWA waters priorities identified in the ACWA categorization, and on needs, priorities, and stewardship gaps identified by the agencies. At a minimum, and the extent possible, the pass-through funds included in the joint solicitation are to be: Clean Water Act Section 319 funding currently administered by DEC; Coastal Impact Assistance Program grants and the Coastal Zone Management Act Section 6217 funding administered by DGC; Southeast Alaska Sustainable Salmon funds currently administered by DF&G; and any future "pass-through" funding relating to water quantity, quality, and aquatic habitat.

6. The state's natural resource agencies will strive to leverage other funding sources to address state ACWA priorities and will encourage partners, particularly federal agencies, to focus funding on ACWA priorities. The agencies are directed to develop and maintain a database of funding sources to attempt to match proposals, projects, and funding sources to ACWA priorities.

7. The agencies are directed to work extensively with local and Tribal governments, watershed councils, federal agencies, and nongovernmental organizations on all elements of ACWA.

This Order takes effect immediately.

Dated at Juneau, Alaska this 2nd day of October, 2002.

S/S Tony Knowles
Tony Knowles
Governor

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