

***Benchmarking Policy Brief – Funding Regional Water Planning and Management
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Regional water management demands more than well-run municipal facilities. The four benchmarking regions we studied are pursuing more efficiently operated water and wastewater infrastructure and cleaning lakes, rivers, and streams through their investments in expert water and environmental planning at the multi-county level. The funding arrangements for their planning entities vary, but all entities are sustained largely with locally generated revenues.

Entities that do not operate water supply or wastewater treatment systems rely primarily on a regional assessment. For example, more than half of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's 2006 budget of \$1,116,199 came from a \$.15 per capita assessment, which produced \$596,199 in local dues. The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission derives roughly one-third of its overall budget from a regional tax levy on county wealth that can be set between .0015 percent and .003 percent; this levy yielded \$2,380,290, which amounted to almost all the funding of its regional environmental planning, including its water planning work. The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency receives 13 percent of its annual revenue from basic dues, which may be increased or decreased by the Governing Board each year, according to U. S. Census population data for each county.

Service provision can be another revenue stream for regional water management planning and programs. In the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division collects service fees to treat the region's wastewater. In recent years, nearly 74 percent of its revenues were produced by municipal wastewater charges, 19 percent were generated from sewer access charges to new and expanding users, and 5 percent resulted from industrial wastewater charges. Ownership and maintenance of the wastewater interceptor system and treatment facilities provide the authority to levy additional charges. For example, the Metropolitan Council will be assessing a surcharge to communities that require assistance with their inflow and infiltration problems. Similarly, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission receives revenue when local governments contract with it to develop plans or offer technical assistance that they might otherwise seek from private-sector consultants.

While generous state funding was not evident in all of these regions, the case of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District suggests that state support is necessary to establish a new entity in the absence of federal funding. In this region, the state allocated \$2 million in funds for the district's first two years of operation, dollars that were critical both in initiating the work and in convincing local governments to back the project. The Board continues to receive \$250,000 each calendar year. The Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division houses experts who can provide an array of services, which results in various state contracts and grants.

Federal funding has not generally been a significant source of revenue. At the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, just over 3 percent of all funds are provided by state and federal environmental protection agencies. The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District did secure federal grants totaling \$2.6 million dollars from its initial work in 2002 through fiscal year 2005. District officials and their representatives in Washington are pursuing funding in the EPA Appropriations bill, and perhaps, like many entities throughout the country, are well-prepared to

serve their regional partners if the Clean Water Trust Fund Act being considered in Congress is passed. More information on that act can be found at www.cleanwateramerica.org.

Entity	Primary Funding Source
Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Division	Service Fees – 98% 2006 Budget
Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District	Regional Levy – 53% 2006 Budget
Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency	Federal and State Transportation Agencies – 80% 2006 Budget
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Regional Levy – 32% 2006 Budget