

WATER ENVIRONMENT FEDERATION

Title: WEF Nutrients in the Watershed Position Statement

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Expiration Date: October 5, 2027

BACKGROUND

Too many nutrients entering waterbodies cause eutrophication, which can lead to harmful algal blooms (HABs) and adverse impacts to aquatic life, causing problems in recreational, food and drinking water sources. Climate change can exacerbate these effects by intensifying drought conditions, lowering available oxygen, and increasing surface water temperatures. Additionally, severe storms can increase runoff and the transfer of nutrients from land to waterbodies.

Since the establishment of the Clean Water Act, there have been significant advancements in nutrient removal processes and technologies, and in the reduction in nutrients entering water bodies from regulated sources such as water resource recovery facilities (WRRFs). However, many sources such as runoff from agricultural fields, animal feedlots, and urban and suburban developments remain significant contributors to nutrient pollution in waterbodies.

ALIGNMENT WITH WEF'S MISSION AND CRITICAL OBJECTIVES

Since 1928, it has been the mission of WEF and its members to protect public health and the environment. This position statement is consistent with our mission and the following critical objectives:

- [3a](#): Be a visible and effective partner that increases public awareness of the value of water, water professionals, and resource recovery at national levels;
- [3b](#): Provide tools for members, Member Associations, utilities, and others to communicate the value of water, water professionals, and resource recovery to the public and decision-makers;
- [4a](#): Drive an increase in resource recovery in the water sector;
- [4c](#): Promote the adoption of innovative utility management and financing practices.

POSITION

Nutrient challenges will not be resolved until all contributors reduce nutrient contributions. Responsibility should be shared equitably, while respecting affordability and environmental justice concerns. WEF supports the following actions to reduce nutrient loads in waterbodies:

- Promote a balanced, holistic, watershed-based framework of practices, policies, and partnerships that considers and engages all stakeholders, to reduce excess nutrient concentrations in an affordable and timely manner.
- Foster a shared understanding, both within and outside the water sector, of the importance of nutrient management within a watershed.
- Advance outreach, education, and technology transfer; emphasizing inclusion of both traditional and nontraditional stakeholders.
- Promote continued watershed data collection efforts that facilitate science-based approaches.
- Support operational, process, and technology improvements, to continue reducing nutrient discharges from all sources, in a sustainable and efficient manner.
- Prioritize multiple benefit management for nutrient reduction.
- Advocate for funding programs with streamlined processing and flexibility to combine funding sources.

- Focus on environmental justice and equity across at every level of planning, financing, design, construction, operation, and delivery of all water infrastructure and services related to nutrient management.