

**SOUTH EASTERN RIVER BASIN DISTRICT PROJECT – AN EXAMPLE OF AN INITIATIVE IN RESPONSE TO THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE**

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As part of a substantial restructuring of EU water policy and legislation, a Directive establishing a new framework for Community action in the field of water policy (2000/60/EC) was agreed by the European Parliament and Council in September 2000 and came into force on 22nd December 2000. The Water Framework Directive rationalises and updates existing water legislations and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBD's). In Ireland the main activities for the implementation of the WFD are taking place in the context of River Basin Management Projects led by local authorities. The Department of Environment & Local Government is promoting the establishment by local authorities of such projects to address all inland and coastal waters that will facilitate participation by all stakeholders, and lead to the identification and implementation of effective measures for improved water management. The South Eastern River Basin District Project, represents 20% of the land area in the Irish Republic, and is the first of five national River Basin Districts to be established and funded under the National Development Plan. The project commenced in April 2002 and will be completed in March 2006. The projects main objective is to develop, establish and during the period of the project implement a River Basin District Management System including a programme of measures, and develop a River Basin District Management Strategy in order to achieve at least good status for all waters in the South Eastern RBD. This Strategy will be a significant precursor to the River Basin Management Plan required by the WFD. The main project tasks are:

- A review of national and EU policy and legislation
- Characterisation of the River Basin District
- The establishment of a River Basin Management System consisting of
- A Monitoring System consisting of water status, facilities and strategic monitoring subsystems
- A Geographical Information System and associated databases and analysis modules
- A Programme of Measures
- A Public Awareness and Consultation Programme
- An Environmental Management System (EMS)
- Interim and Final Reports on implementation of the River Basin Management System
- A River Basin Management Strategy

Tasks 1 and 2 are complete and all sub-tasks under Task 3 are under way. The paper will provide an outline of the project strategy and an assessment of progress with Tasks 2 and 3.