

**THE FRENCH APPROACH TO MANAGING WATER RESOURCES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE NEW EUROPEAN WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE**

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The main content of the new European Water Framework Directive is presented. Within its river basin management approach, a special mention of coastal waters status is made. Among the issues at stake are the setting up of river basin management plans, including coastal waters, and water quality assessment system leading to an harmonized definition of quality objectives and their appropriate indicators. The Rhone-Mediterranean-Corsica Water Master Plan, launched in 1996, is considered to be well fitted to this river basin approach and the necessary tools which go with it. Insights into the Master Plan and its follow-up are given considering the specific problem of setting up quality objectives for each media and use. It shows up how a river Quality Assessment System (SEQ) can be adapted to the coastal waters and how it can progressively lead to an efficient set of publishable environmental and performance indicators. Since planning and implementation are devolved to the lowest appropriate level, a close look is then been given at how such a system can work at the local level, examining comparatively the different planning tools available and their implementation through different selected case studies on the French Mediterranean coast. In conclusion, some guidelines are drawn up for future initiatives towards integrated coastal area and river basin management.