

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The South Eastern River Basin District Management System

The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EEC), which entered into force on 22 December 2000, demands a comprehensive and integrated approach to water management.

Implementation of the Water Framework Directive requires a series of key tasks which include:

Table 1.1. Key Tasks and Related Articles of the Water Framework Directive

Date	WFD Article	Key tasks
2003	Article 24	Implementation of the WFD on a National level
2003	Article 3	Establishing of River Basin Districts as the fundamental unit for applying and co-ordinating the Directive's provisions
2004	Articles 4, 5, and 6	Integration of environmental objectives. Characterisation of water bodies and agreeing key water management issues. Establishment of a register of protected areas.
2006	Article 8	Establishing and maintaining appropriate Monitoring Programmes - Such monitoring must cover both surface and groundwater.
2009	Article 11	Designing Programmes of Measures and developing River Basin Management Plans for their implementation
2010	Article 9	Water Pricing Policies that take into account the principle of 'cost recovery' for water services
ongoing	Article 14	Public Information and Consultation

Figure 1.1 presents the proposed series of river basins covering the Island of Ireland (Eco-Region 17). Some of the basins are international river basin districts as they drain land areas in northern and southern Ireland. A standard approach is required throughout all river basins in the region, consequently a series of technical advisory groups and working groups has been established to facilitate the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

The South Eastern River Basin District Management System is the first project in Ireland in support of the national strategy to implement the Water Framework Directive. The €8.25 million project has been financed by the DELG through the National Development Plan and commenced in April 2002.

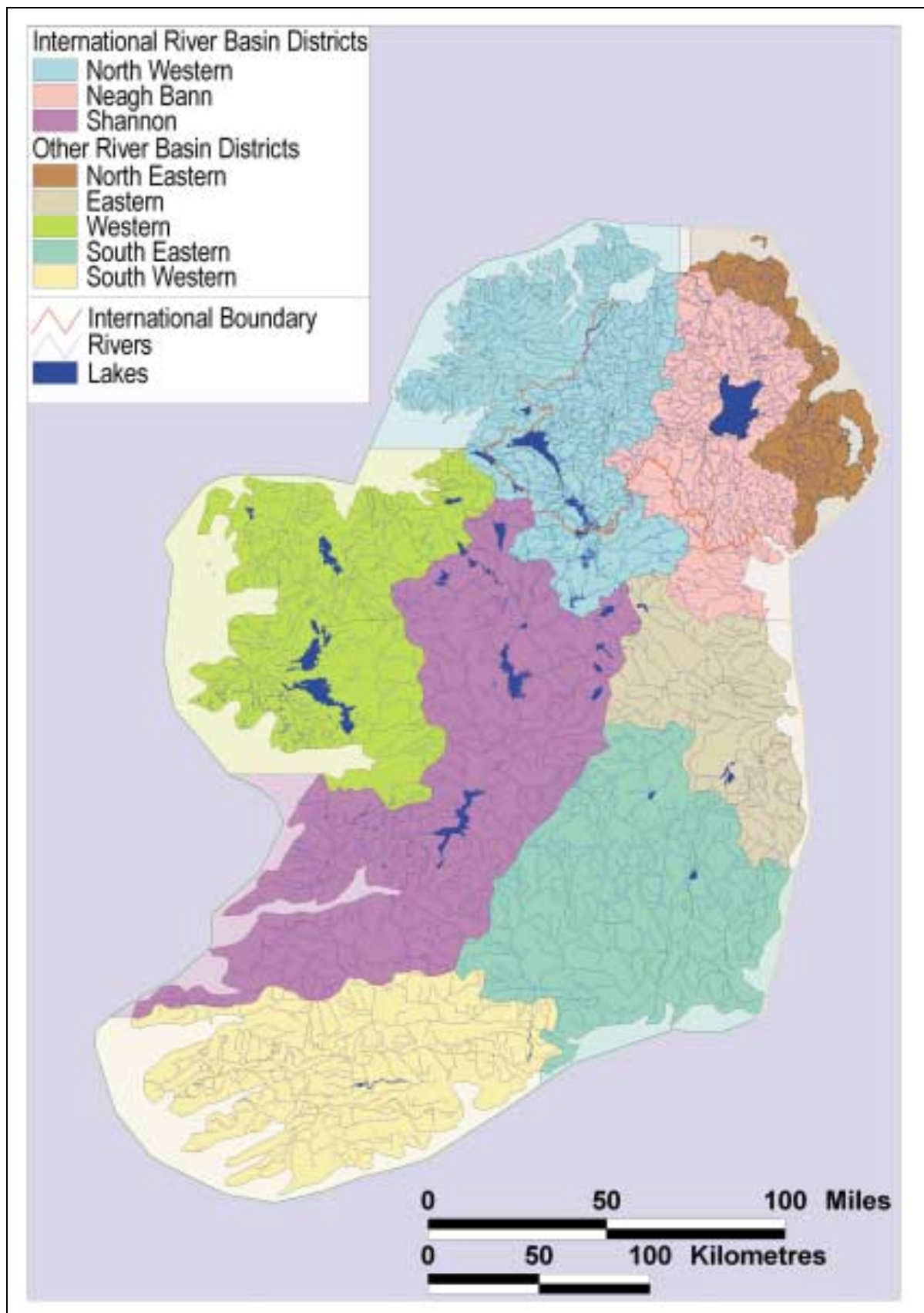


Figure 1.1 Proposed International River Basin District and River Basin Districts
(Source: Managing Our Shared Waters – Consultation Document EHS 2003)

1.2 Report Scope and Structure

The purpose of this initial characterisation report is to collect and analyse all existing datasets to provide a baseline report. This is an essential first step in characterising the South Eastern River Basin District and establishing key management issues.

This initial characterisation exercise will enable the development of recommendations for monitoring programmes and the design of measures which will be presented within the River Basin Management Strategy.

Water Bodies

Progress in relation to studies at EU and National Level characterising water bodies in accordance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive is summarized in Section 2.0. Section 3.0 of this report presents a physical description of the South Eastern River Basin District (hydrometric areas 11-17) to assist with this characterisation process.

Pressures

With regard to identification and assessment of pressures the report structure follows the approach adopted in the Common Implementation Strategy guidance on analysis of pressures and impacts: i.e. the DPSIR framework (Driver, Pressure, State, Impact, Response) where:

- driver = an anthropogenic activity that may have an environmental effect;
- pressure = a direct effect of the driver;
- state = the condition of the water body as a result of natural and anthropogenic factors;
- impact = the environmental effect of the pressure;
- response = the measures taken to improve the state of the body including those to reduce pressures.

Section 4.0 identifies the drivers and pressures exerted by human activities within the river basin and highlights the potential associated impacts. The existing monitoring programmes and the assessment of current status of waters and facilities are presented in Sections 5.0 and 6.0 respectively. Section 7.0 details estimates of nutrient loading quantifying the impact of pressures. Section 8.0 presents an overview of responses, or management practices highlighting the current effectiveness and compliance with national requirements. The conclusions of the initial characterisation exercise identifying information gaps and summarising activities and responsibilities required to fill them, are presented in Section 9.0.

The position in each of 12 local authorities participating in the Project was summarised in interim sub reports. The small portion of County Cork (2.2 km²) within the South Eastern River Basin District did not necessitate a sub report. Where relevant, information for County Cork has been included in the main report.

Appendix A contains example output of groundwater characterisation studies. Appendix B summarises the bedrock and subsoils of the South Eastern River Basin District. Appendix C contains details of key flora and fauna species in the river basin. Appendix D contains extracts from the EPA Kilkenny Regional Inspectorate water quality report on the South East (2001). Appendix E presents an EPA evaluation of the existing hydrometric network.

The Project team would like to acknowledge the considerable efforts of all those organisations which provided information as part of the data collection exercise in support of this report and in particular the members of the Technical Review Group.

This initial characterisation report will be updated as additional mapping and datasets become available. The final characterisation report is required by December 2004.