

AUTHORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The role assigned to the Regions for the management of water resources is of strategic importance, as they are expected to handle the delicate job of translating the principles of sustainable use of this natural resource into rules, planning, actions and interventions.

At a European level, in fact, and partly implemented in national legislation, a new approach that safeguards water supplies has matured, it is founded on setting objectives of environmental quality, and on the utilisation of water bodies, and it is a significant improvement over the previous policies based merely on fixing limits of acceptability of polluting inputs; the new approach intends to consider all the aspects tied to water protection in a unitary and integrated way.

The fundamental starting point is the collection of data that will support the choices to be made; these data must be solid, detailed and reliable, so that the decisions will be sustainable. The acquisition of knowledge on the water state is very important (monitoring of the quality and quantity of the surface and underground waters) and understanding the effects on these of man's activities (a register of users, discharges, water service infrastructures and irrigation networks).



The enormous amount of information acquired will naturally require computerised handling, set up through the Sistema Informativo Regionale delle Risorse Idriche (Regional Water Resources Information System), that will enable authorities to relate each single datum on the specific body of water to a territorial base.

An accurate survey of the characteristics of Piedmont's waters becomes, then, the essential foundation for the adoption of decisions involving water management, for planning protective actions from both the quality and of quantity point of view, for disciplining the rational utilisation of the resource, for defining the objectives and the quality standards of the waters, and consequently for setting the limits for discharges, organising the aqueduct water services, sewage and depuration, and establishing the regulations for the various uses.

So, it is an integrated approach, but also flexible, which can evolve and diversify adapting to the specific needs of local situations, ready also to conform to the inevitable changes of the natural and human environment.



INTRODUCTION

The Piedmont Region, with its important mountain streams, its big flatland rivers, its lakes, its high-quality springs and extensive aquifers in the plains, for a long time has recognised the social and strategic value of water as a vital public asset, and it has shown growing attention to problems connected to its use, and to the risks of the degradation of its quality and availability.

Substantial resources have been invested in these years to gather complete information on the characteristics of Piedmont's surface and underground water; to study the factors that can affect and alter the ecosystems, and to build up water service infrastructures - in some cases of real excellence at a European level - and to adopt measures to safeguard and reclaim bodies of water.



WATER RESOURCES PLANNING

PROBLEMS

The effort needed today to ensure a sustainable use of this resource involves integrating the principles of water protection in all our decisions and policies for development.

Translating this principle into operating solutions means investing in many diversified competences that allow us to understand the many implications of an economic, social, scientific and juridical nature of the new man-nature relationship.

WATER RESOURCES PLANNING



Assessorato Ambiente, Parchi e Aree Protette, Risorse Idriche, Acque Minerali e Termali



LAWS AND REGULATIONS

At a European level, a sector policy has been stated based on the awareness of the need for global and sustainable action to protect water resources; this was made concrete in Directive 23 October 2000 no. 2000/60/CE, that sets up a framework for Community action in the water field.

Two basic concepts are expressed in this outline directive: the first underlines the importance of water as a fundamental resource, not only because it satisfies the primary needs of the population and is vital for all ecosystems, but also as a key to development that can produce and sustain well-being. The second points out the need to undertake actions to safeguard the water resource, to avoid its qualitative deterioration and its quantitative impoverishment.

Italian regulations, already back in the late 1980s, acknowledged, with law 18 May 1989 no. 163, the need for a general planning discipline, which introduced the concept of defence of the land that included also issues connected to the use of water resources, their planning, a survey of the existing derivations and a plan for their possible future uses.

Later, with Law 5 January 1994, no. 36 (Legge Galli), the principle of State ownership was affirmed; this eliminated the previous distinction between public and private waters, and stated that all surface and underground waters, even if not extracted from underground, are public, and are a resource that must be used according to criteria of solidarity, safeguarding the expectations and the rights of future generations to have a complete environmental heritage.

PRINCIPAL PROVISIONS

European Community, national and regional regulations assign important and diversified responsibilities for the protection and the rational use of the waters to public operators (regulations, action programmes, infrastructures, etc.) and also to the users (discharge limits, with-drawals rationalisation, etc.) with the understanding that only with the involvement of the entire community, each fulfilling its specific role, will it be possible to guarantee the protection of our precious water resources.

Among the actions intending to set up a balance between satisfying the needs and the availability of the supply, particular importance was dedicated to the reorganisation of the public services of collection, storage and distribution of the water for civil uses, for sewage and waste water depuration, into a single integrated water system founded on the principles of efficiency, efficacy and economic convenience.

With legislative decree 11 May 1999 no. 152, Italy partially anticipated in its legislation the guidelines of European Community Directive 2000/60, setting ambitious objectives to obtain improvements in the state of its waters, reducing pollution, striving for sustainable uses of the water resources, maintaining the natural self-purification capacity of the water bodies.

This regulation, therefore, marks the passage from a policy of mere pollution reduction to a policy based on prevention, on rational management of natural resources, on promoting a manufacturing system using technologies with a minor environmental impact.

The new discipline, centred on fixing quality objectives for each body of water, emphasises not only on the single sources of impact, but also on the entire water ecosystem (from the quality and quantity point of view), so that it will be able to maintain and support widespread and diversified animal and vegetal communities as much as possible in their natural conditions.

On a regional scale, the need emerged to draft a legislative text that would embody all the various regional laws in the sector that had been adopted and that governed the discharge and derivations of surface water, the collection of underground water, coordinating and innovating the regulations where necessary to guarantee the implementation of the new principles introduced, to safeguard the water destined to human consumption, to regulate the water services and deal with all other issues that interfere, directly or indirectly, with the correct management of this vital resource.

Awaiting a single text, Regional Law 29 December 2000, no. 61 deferred to numerous regulations the discipline of some particular aspects, that urgently needed special regulation or adaptation of the regulations in force.

IMPORTANT PLANS AND PROJECTS

In December 2000, the Piano Direttoria Regionale delle Risorse Idriche (Regional Directive Plan for Water Resources) was approved, with which Piedmont defined (coordinated at the highest levels) the governing objectives and strategy, fixing the general objective of a sustainable policy in planning issues, management and safeguarding of water resources and the water environment, striving to achieve a correct balance between the maintenance of a natural ecological state and the satisfaction of the needs of economic and social development.

This Directive Plan is published in its entirety on the Region's Internet site.

In line with the European Community guidelines and enacting legislative decree d.lgs. 152/1999, the Piano di Tutela delle Acque (The Water Protection Plan) adopted by the Regional Council in September 2004 - defines, based on a thorough analysis of the territorial context and the pressures it is subjected to, a series of actions aimed, on one hand, to guarantee respectively by 2008 and by 2016, the achievement or the maintenance of the objectives, intermediate and final, of the quality of the bodies of water, and on the other, the measures in any case necessary to safeguard the quantity and quality of all the surface and ground waters, that will complete the results already reached with a broader, coordinated view of the problems still unsolved.

This Plan, the fruit of three years of careful studies and of the work of over 70 experts of qualified engineering companies, of the Regional Environmental Agency, of the University and the Polytechnic of Torino, coordinated by the Regional Management, was offered for consultation to all the operators in the sector, facilitated by its publication on the Regional Internet Site, in an effort to make the level of participation and agreement on the decisions as universal as possible.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

The Region is the intermediary agency, on one hand, with national and European Community subjects, that are responsible for setting the regulatory principles of the issue, and, on the other hand, with the system of local autonomies, that, coherent with their subsidiary role, handle the principal operating functions.

So, the relations between organisms are important: Community (general Management of the European Commission), State and super-regional (basin authorities), in order to agree on the strategies, the directions, the objectives and the general criteria.

No less fundamental are the links between the local bodies (Provinces, Municipalities, Mountain Communities, environment authorities) aimed at coordinating their management roles, the constant contacts with technical and scientific and support bodies with the university world and the organisations having diverse economic interests tied to this resource.

To facilitate discussions between these operators, the "Conferenza Regionale delle Risorse Idriche" (Regional Conference of Water Resources) has been founded, that is the centre for political coordination of the principal strategies in water issues.

Moreover, as the choices and decisions regarding water supplies must include the needs in territory planning, agriculture, industry, energy, fishing and tourism, it is essential to have contacts with the institutions and the structures working in these different sectors and with the stakeholders involved.

THE MAIN AND CONTROVERSIAL PROBLEMS

As happens in most situations of our planet, the rich heritage of Piedmont's water resources is limited and threatened by careless consumption, by waste, and by many sources of pollution. To safeguard this asset, perhaps our most precious wealth, we need to be conscientiously prudent in all the decisions and development policies that regard it.

The greatest difficulty seems to be the resistance of each sector policy against adopting the approach of sustainable development, accepting the environmental costs, providing incentives for research and technological innovation, not yet realising the great opportunity that "ecological quality" can offer as a motor for economic recovery, bearer of a real improvement of the quality of life.

STRATEGIES

Safeguarding our water heritage and its rational uses will not be achievable only through the interventions of the subjects directly appointed for its management. The entire community must be involved, together with the consolidation of a culture founded on the awareness of the value of water and respect for this irreplaceable resource.

To overcome this stalemate, we need to promote a process of aware participation of all the actors involved in the programming and enactment of the processes under way, to convince the citizens and the actors of the manufacturing world to make changes in their styles of life, in their production cycles and in the development of markets in line with the needs of individual and community growth.

WORKS AND PUBLICATIONS AND HOW TO OBTAIN THEM

In these past years, this Department has issued numerous publications in an effort to provide the information, research and data it has collected to as many people as possible; these works are available at the reference sectors.

The Regional Site:

<http://www.regione.piemonte.it/acqua/index.htm>

COORDINATES

DIREZIONE REGIONALE 10 - Ambiente
Director: Salvatore DE GIORGIO
TORINO, Via Principe Amedeo, 17,
Tel. 011-4321413,
Fax 011-4324632.

drezioneB10@regione.piemonte.it