



## **Water law in Armenia: its impacts on water basin management**

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Water is the basic natural resource and is considered as a strategic economic one. Modern water basin management approaches and techniques were introduced in Armenia while reviewing the old Water Code of 1992 and currently are gaining more and more popularity in being used to increase efficiency of vulnerable water resources management. The revision of legislation had a great impact on applying international best practices including those on water basin management in Armenia. According to revised Water Code of 2002 water resources include all surface and subterranean (sub-surface) waters, including any stream, river, spring, wetland, lake, pond, snow pack, glacier, aquifer, and any other body of water, including seasonal water resources. Water Code states that water resources existing in the territory of the Republic of Armenia are the state property and the state government has the responsibility to manage and protect them.

With increasing water issues and conflicts, river basing management is increasingly acknowledged as the appropriate option for the management of water resources. Again, according to the adopted Water Code, the Water Basin Management Authorities were established in the composition of the State Water Resources Management and Protection Body in order to promote more effective, purposeful and decentralized management of water resources. Following the Water Code National Water Policy - a concept of perspective development of strategic use and protection of water resources

and water systems - have been developed and adopted in 2005. Afterwards the National Water Program - main document of perspective development of management and conservation of water resources and water systems – was developed and accepted in 2006. Based on the National Water Program the Water Basin Management Authorities shall develop and implement Water Management Plans, which are comprehensive documents on water management describing the management and conservation activities to be implemented within each water basin.

A lot was done during last decade to address such issues as poor water quality, inadequate wastewater treatment, ineffective management of water resources due to hydraulic infrastructure deterioration, water losses, lack of water regulation, but a lot still to be done to ensure the sustainability of water resources use, including proper implementation of short-, medium- and long-term priority actions developed as a part of National Water Program.

This paper illustrates the overall water management and administration scheme currently existing in Armenia. It focuses on the overlapping mandates and interaction between various state agencies. The paper also presents analysis the reasons why conflicts and disputes among various policies and strategies arise, thus negatively impacting administration efficiency and leading to the degradation of water environment. Considering the complexity of water administration and limited availability of water resources both geographically and in time, some trends should be developed in water related agencies to improve the efficiency of water management. In particular, paper discusses the strengthening of water planning, use, protection and management related agencies, with focus on those involved in water basin management.