



State Water Plan Update Great Lakes Water Resources Regional Committee Meeting

October 28, 2020
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Skype

Committee Members in Attendance:

Tim Bruno	Amy Murdock
Jason Childs	Craig Palmer
Tony Foyle	Deborah Phillips
Joe Greco	Timothy Wachter
Rebecca Hosack	Matthew Wolford
Melissa Lyon	David Wright
Tom McClure	

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Robert Buhl	Susan Moyer
James Cardman	Zachary Norwood
Harry (Ric) Diz	Brenda Sandberg
Patrick Gehrlein	Dennis Whitney
Daniel Gold	Kathy Wyrosdick

Others in Attendance:

Kristina Peacock-Jones - DEP	Monica Gould - Strategic Consulting Partners
Mark Matlock - DEP	Bob Whitmore - Strategic Consulting Partners
James Horton - DEP	
Mike Hill - DEP	
Brad Chalfant - DEP	

Visitors

Curtis Schreffler
Sim Suter

Welcome

Mark Matlock, DEP, welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the meeting was being recorded, and provided helpful hints on the use of the technology. Craig Palmer, Committee Chair, welcomed committee members to the meeting and completed a roll call for attendance by voice and chat acknowledgement.

Public Comment

Chair Palmer opened the meeting for public comment. An opportunity to express comments verbally or in the chat box was offered. No public comment was offered.

Minutes

The minutes of the July 29, 2020 meeting were reviewed. The minutes were approved on a David Wright / Matt Wolford motion. The vote was via voice voting.

DEP State Water Plan Update

Kristina Peacock-Jones, DEP, provided an update on DEP activities. The USGS Water Use Data and Research Grants data sharing projects are still progressing. The project for improving Chapter 110 data input is about 80% complete. The project involving data sharing between agencies has been initiated and the IT architecture and data sharing protocols are being finalized.

Staff within the Department are gathering noteworthy activities and projects achieved over the past ten years that coincide with the State Water Plan. This information will be spotlighted in the State Water Plan update.

The stormwater program is in the process of developing an updated stormwater best practices manual to incorporate green infrastructure. The Energy Programs Office, who is responsible for updating the Governor's Climate Action Plan, is currently in the revision process for the 2021 iteration of the plan. Valuable input provided by Committee members will be passed along to these DEP programs.

DEP staff are continuing to work on better data sharing tools. One of those tools is Power BI, which will display water use data to the public in a more user-friendly way.

Presentation on POWER BI

Michael Hill, DEP Geologist, provided a visual presentation and overview of Power BI. Power BI is a data sharing tool designed to expand the number of existing online water use report viewers by eliminating the need to crunch a large dataset for a summary report. It is a Microsoft application. The data presents visually the amount of surface and ground water used within the state. It does not assess water availability.

Maps, tables, and charts are available to show water withdrawals, water usage types and a breakdown of water users. The data can be viewed for each Pennsylvania County, state water planning regions, subbasins, and watersheds. The information can be exported to an Excel spreadsheet or csv format.

The current map, charts, and tables show data for 2018. Eventually data will be available for multiple years and show trends in water usage. 2019 data should be available early 2021 when it is confirmed all suppliers have provided their data. Power BI will be available to the public on the DEP website soon. The system is currently completing internal review by IT and Communications staff prior to approval for public use.

Regional Committee Survey Data

A DEP online survey was available for Great Lakes Regional Committee members to complete prior to the meeting. The survey asked participants to provide open ended responses to two questions on stormwater management and climate change. The survey feedback was reviewed, and Committee members were given an opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions.

The first survey question on stormwater management and summarized survey responses included:

The last State Water Plan update included stormwater management with a focus on flood management. The goal for updating the stormwater management portion is to include a stronger focus on stormwater BMPs, which address both quantity and quality. What other areas of stormwater management do you think should be considered for this update?

- Provide funding for counties to complete Act 167 Stormwater Management Plans, Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance regulations, zoning, and hazard mitigation plans.
- Consideration of changing storm event frequencies, duration and return frequencies as they relate to BMP design standards.
- Consider quantity and quality with cost/benefit analysis.
- Assess aging infrastructure for high frequency storm events, erosion control, and filtration.
- Stormwater BMPs do not function the same in all areas and some areas need assistance in creating unique BMPs. Making land available to install BMPs.
- Large amounts of impervious area, huge parking lots from vacant shopping malls, and retrofitting existing aging BMP's.

Committee members comments:

- Infrastructure is a priority; within different parts of Erie county infrastructure needs to be replaced and expanded
- Managing storm events is critical
- Aging infrastructure is a concern in Baker Creed with flooding occurring in the downtown district
- The bullet points do not align with the Committee's priorities. Climate change seems to be a bigger priority than the Committee identified it to be.
- We need good data on storm frequency, USGS data, significant strain on infrastructure
- Focus on the problem, do not predict where climate change is going to occur
- Include a public health perspective
- Bullet #2 and #5 can be grouped together, storm water comes from rain events, more intense storms, and shorter duration; BMPs - they work well in some areas and do not work in other areas
- Infrastructure must be planned, funded, and built to deal with severe rain events; how can the aging infrastructure be replaced

- Act 167 stormwater management plans; most municipalities have storm water plans; many Act 167 plans are outdated and undersized and should be updated; Is there funding to update the plans?
- Education and outreach will be important
- Large impervious areas lead to stream contaminants and water quality issues; these areas need to be retrofitted to meet current needs
- Addressing current problems and not predicting the future is better use of our resources
- Looking at potential causes of climate change is not necessarily the direction of this committee
- DEP BMPs are currently being revised
- Stormwater management is the #1 issue in this region
- You can have the best infrastructure in place but if it is not maintained in will not work effectively

The second survey question on climate change and summarized survey responses included:

Now that we have briefly discussed climate change at our July meeting, which aspects of climate change do you think we should focus on in our discussion at the next meeting for consideration in the State Water Plan update?

- The potential/likelihood for increased storm frequency and intensity. How these storms events can and should be handled to reduce risks to safety and environmental impacts. Amount of rain vs. snow.
- Rising levels of the Great Lakes
- Preparing to be resilient in terms of both flash flooding and potential decreased groundwater recharge. Discuss the implications of such events and changes in waterway flow.
- Planning for resilience to an amplified drought of record for protection and conservation. Would help to address increased droughts.
- Consider the future risk of deeper droughts brought on by climate change and the measures needed to promote groundwater infiltration to maintain aquifers.
- Climate change implications on water supply vulnerability, availability, and reliability should be considered (i.e. increased temperatures and the implications on source water quality and aquatic/ ecological health of waterways).

Committee members comments:

- Climate matters: how do we build a resilient system?
- High levels of water and drought at the same time
- Fluctuating water levels in Lake Erie
- Recharging of storm water
- Extremes must be planned for
- Drought contingency plans are needed
- Infiltration and managing water; ground water recharge
- Protect infrastructure from higher water levels, including sewage system overflows

- Alternative best management practices list provided to municipalities, bio-based products
- Water quality - algal blooms, contaminants, bacteria
- Main concern is aging infrastructure
- Tourism and economic impacts of climate change
- Rising water level of Great Lakes and the impact it creates on tourism, erosion, and residential communities
- Main concern is aging infrastructure and funding to address it
- Most residents in Erie County are served by public water supply; non-public users are more impacted by drought issues
- Pennsylvania is required to have a Conservation Efficiency Programs: work with Public Water Suppliers to ensure these are in place
- Cycles and variability of water levels should be met more quickly
- Climate resilience, context around the why behind what is happening; how can we adapt to the trends we are seeing; focus is not on mitigation
- Erie is not worried about a drought, but other communities a short distance away rely on surface water reservoirs, one size policies cannot be adopted
- What can we do about droughts, should we be looking at community systems? Community systems are expensive to build in rural areas
- Prepare for extremes with data, need to focus on the science and data numbers
- Climate change terminology has been divisive, use the term resiliency because it is less divisive.

The third survey question: “Is there a project that comes to mind during the past 10 years geared toward water quantity, water quality, and/or water conservation that you would like to consider use highlighting for the State Water Plan update?”

Responses were:

- Cascade Creek restoration project
- Delisting of Presque Isle Bay as an area of concern

Committee Members’ Comments:

- Erie sewage treatment plan - upgrades; eliminate SSOs; installation of new filters (series of straws) to replace sand filters; storage impoundments were open and now closed; a decade of work with water quality improvements
- PA Vines Program - implementing projects throughout the watershed; funded by Great Lakes Restoration and Growing Greener funds; vineyard owners and agricultural entities
- PA Stream improvement projects
- PA Sea Grant - active in restoration projects in Lake Erie tributaries, large project of 7 miles, multiple stream and wetland projects in the water shed
- Borough of Union City - Located partially in Great Lakes and partially in Ohio regions, aggressive program to build a new plant and provide best water to the community
- Source Water Protection Plans - West County, Northeast Borough

Resources Provided in the Chat

- <https://seagrant.psu.edu/>

Region's Priorities, IWRP, and Uniqueness

The following summary information was prepared for the Statewide Committee meeting in August.

Great Lakes Region

Committee's Top Priorities

1. Support legislation and other measures that will protect the quantity and quality of water in Lake Erie - protect Lake Erie from outside legal decision, PA should have a voice in federal legislation that impacts the shores of Lake Erie, Commonwealth should consider taking a more aggressive approach in the courts when decisions are made that impact water quality.
2. Collaboration, coordination, and communications with partner jurisdictions, other states, and Canada - education and outreach, land use impact and best practices, maintain the hydrologic integrity of the region, regional approach of municipalities in collaboration, DEP's role is to encourage and incentivize regional cooperation through grant funding.
3. Water quality - analysis of contaminants, storm water management, climate change impact, agricultural best practices.

Integrated Water Resources Planning

- Start with outreach and education
- Incentives are better than interventions
- PA's role is to provide unbiased, manageable data, financial and non-financial incentives

Region's Uniqueness

- Lake Erie - vital economic asset to the Commonwealth
- Potable water impacted by Canada and other U.S. states
- Reliance on tourism and recreation

Committee Members' Comments:

Priorities

- Infrastructure is a big priority but is not listed in our priorities
- How is infrastructure being funded and who is making decisions
- Need an assessment of infrastructure and impact on communities
- Resiliency vs. climate change
- Addressing extreme weather conditions vs. climate change impact

- #2 collaboration should include the business community; define how the collaboration and coordination will be accomplished
- Change DEP's role to "incentivize regional cooperation with funding instead of just mandates"
- #1 Change supporting legislation to "promoting", supporting is to passive, proactive approach to Lake Erie legislation, communicating with legislators
- Do we want to make a statement or make a difference, do not get lost in the politics, address actual problems

IWRP

- #2 expanded to support the top priorities
- #1 - the word start is misleading, change to "prioritize"
- Understand local needs

Region's Uniqueness

- #1 and #3 could be combined
- Great Lakes - navigational waters that lead to business and industry
- Highlight agriculture - vineyards, grapes - healthy water supply means a healthy industry
- Opportunity zones and economic development work has been powerful

Next Steps

Chair Palmer thanked all committee members for their attendance, participation, and ideas.

Mark Matlock, DEP staff, provided an overview of the Committee's future work.

- Summary notes from today's discussion will be provided to Committee members.
- A virtual public hearing is planned for the first week of January, tentatively January 6. There will be two public hearings sessions held in one day and each regional committee's public hearing will last one hour. The am public hearing session will be an opportunity for public input on the Delaware, Potomac, and Lower Susquehanna regions. The afternoon public hearing session will be an opportunity for public input on the Ohio, Great Lakes, and Upper/Middle Susquehanna regions.
- At the January regional committee meeting the Committee members will discuss and vote on part or all the regional water planning priorities, stormwater management priorities, and climate change priorities.
- At the April 2021 regional committee meeting Committee members will finalize the priorities they wish to move forward to the State Committee.
- The State Committee will finalize the updated state water plan at the scheduled meeting in May 2021.

The next meeting of the Great Lakes Regional Committee will be held on January 27, 2021. It will be a virtual meeting. The April Committee meeting is scheduled for April 28, 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 am on a Matt Wolford / Craig Palmer motion.