

DRAFT - MARCH 12, 2008 – DRAFT

INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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Background

For over a decade Pennsylvania has administered its water resources management programs on a watershed scale by encouraging local leadership and community action through financial and technical assistance. This approach has received national recognition and has produced lasting results, but an effective water resources management program must continue to build on its accomplishments to maintain energy and momentum. Successful water resources planning and management now demand a more organized and integrated course that combines the assets of all levels of government, private sector interests, and citizen participation.

Strategic Direction

Integrated water resources management entails making common sense decisions while considering water quantity and water quality needs. To chart a seamless and transparent course toward this goal, three strategic areas must be addressed:

- blending the components and processes of water resources management within DEP
- improving coordination across state agencies and throughout the federal, interstate, state and local government hierarchy, and
- solidifying the connection between land use and water resource management.

The following discussion examines these three concepts in more detail.

DEP should administer its water resources management, watershed restoration and protection, and water quality management programs in a more consolidated and coordinated fashion. The strong relationships among these programs should be used as the principal criterion guiding DEP's organizational alignment, strategic policy choices, and daily decision-making.

DEP should continually strive to improve coordination among state agencies, as well as throughout the hierarchy of governance in Pennsylvania. State agencies have an obligation to work toward common objectives so that statutes, regulations and policies are mutually supportive, efficiencies are gained, and conflict, duplication and waste are

avoided. Similarly, federal, state, interstate and local governments need to align their efforts to ensure consistency among water resources management initiatives and take advantage of their combined wisdom and capital. The private sector, non-profit organizations and interested individuals should serve as partners in charting and following a united course.

Land use has a profound influence on water resources planning and management. Federal, interstate and state governments have broad mandates to manage and regulate water resources. Pennsylvania municipalities have authority to adopt comprehensive plans, zoning regulations, and subdivision and land development ordinances. Local land use decisions should integrate water resources management objectives in order to sustain economic growth while also achieving environmental protection goals.

Recommendations for initiating Integrated Water Resources Management

Integrated water resources planning and management offers a direct and efficient way to confront complex topics and concerns as they emerge from the state water planning process. This approach will not anticipate every pitfall, but it will serve as a practical means to identify and avoid major problems, and as a viable instrument to resolve conflicts among water users and uses. To initiate integrated water resources planning and management in Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth should:

- 1. DEP, with the advice and guidance of the Statewide Water Resources Committee, will develop and evaluate a framework and incentives for integrated water resources planning and management** -- DEP, with assistance from other state agencies, compact basin commissions and local government representatives, should develop a framework that links water resources planning elements from the State Water Plan and programs such as Sewage Facilities Planning, Stormwater Management Planning, Source Water Protection Planning, the Watershed Restoration and Protection Program, Water Supply and Wastewater Planning, and Flood Control Planning. Ultimately, this concept enhances water resources planning in Pennsylvania and focuses our planning efforts toward watersheds through county/multi-county/multi-municipal planning. In conjunction with this technical guidance, DEP should craft a financial incentive package that encourages integrated water resources planning and implementation. Initially, the incentive bank could be capitalized from various DEP financial assistance programs, DCNR's Rivers Conservation Fund, and DCED's Land Use Technical Assistance Fund.

This approach enables counties to develop integrated water resources plans and provide planning consultation services to the municipalities in their jurisdiction. Municipalities would adopt the county/multi-county plan and develop ordinances that are consistent with the plan. Counties with a DEP-approved integrated water resources plan could be eligible for priority state funding to implement the recommendations of the plan. To be considered for funding the relevant county plan would need to be generally consistent with the State Water Plan.

- 2. Implement trial integrated water resources plans using the Stormwater Management Planning program (Act 167) in cooperation with willing counties/multi-county areas** -- DEP should work with willing local government

officials and citizens to undertake integrated water resources planning in a variety of settings. The plans should encompass the elements in the framework, recommend implementation vehicles, and identify specific decision-points and decisions makers. The trial plans should be developed and implemented within the existing regulatory structure. The trial planning efforts should be continuously assessed to reveal gaps, barriers, inconsistencies, inefficiencies, and decision-making voids created by the current regulatory and institutional structures. Based on the outcome of these evaluations, the above-referenced framework may be revised or further enhanced for more a more efficient planning process, and proposals to amend pertinent regulations, and to revise institutional organization or responsibilities governing all levels of water resources management should be made.

3. **Provide services to assist county and local officials prepare and implement integrated water resources management plans** -- Ongoing training should be conducted to educate county and municipal officials about the practical benefits and fiscal advantages of integrated water resources planning and management. DEP should provide flexible planning guidelines and model ordinances to assist county and local government officials develop and implement integrated water resources plans that meet their specific needs. Model ordinances, guidance, standards, and criteria should be developed and recommended for use by municipalities to aid in implementing their plans and ordinances. Training that is tailored to municipal solicitors and engineers should also be presented. Non-government organizations such as the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors and the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, and professional associations including the Pennsylvania Planning Association and the Consulting Engineers Council should be prepared to offer counties and municipalities the assistance and guidance needed to adopt approaches that best suit their water resources objectives.
4. **Provide sufficient resources to re-establish the multi-agency single point of contact (SPOC) for integrated water resource plans** -- The multi-agency SPOC for integrated water resources plans should be coordinated by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services and include participation by the DEP, DCNR, PENNVEST, PennDOT, PEMA, and PUC to prioritize integrated water resource planning and implementation. The decisions of these agencies must be consistent with the State Water Plan.
5. **Review current policies and identify potential roadblocks to integrated water resources management** -- During and after the development of the trial integrated water resources plan for selected counties, a third party should assist DEP staff and the Statewide Water Resources Committee identify roadblocks to successful integrated water resources management plan implementation, as well as legislative changes and possible amendments that would encourage more effective and efficient water resources integration. This analysis and the recommendations that flow from the trial projects will be highlighted and implemented as appropriate. The recommendations will reviewed and updated as part of the 2013 State Water Plan.