



**State Water Plan Update  
Great Lakes Water Resources Regional Committee Meeting**

January 27, 2021  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Tim Bruno       | Craig Palmer     |
| Jason Childs    | Deborah Phillips |
| Tony Foyle      | Timothy Wachter  |
| Tom McClure     | Matthew Wolford  |
| Zachary Norwood | Kathy Wyrosdick  |

**Committee Members Not in Attendance:**

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Robert Buhl      | Melissa Lyon    |
| James Cardman    | Susan Moyer     |
| Harry (Ric) Diz  | Amy Murdock     |
| Patrick Gehrlein | Brenda Sandberg |
| Daniel Gold      | Dennis Whitney  |
| Joe Greco        | David Wright    |
| Rebecca Hosack   |                 |

**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          |  |
| Summer Kunkel - DEP          |  |

**Visitors**

Josie Gaskey

**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.

## **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 October 28, 2020 meeting could not be approved because of a lack of quorum of members.

## **DEP State Water Plan Update**

Kristina Peacock-Jones, DEP, provided an update on DEP activities. The USGS Water Use Data and Research (WUDR) Grants data sharing projects are progressing well. The project for improving Chapter 110 data input is complete and should go live during the first quarter of 2021. The project involving data sharing between agencies (SRBC, DRBC, and USGS) has been initiated with the IT architecture and data sharing protocols in place. Testing of the data sharing has begun and the project should be fully operational during the first quarter of 2021.

Another one of our data sharing tools, Power BI, has been completed. This data sharing tool will display water use data to the public in a more user-friendly way.

A virtual public hearing was conducted on January 6, 2021 to solicit comments from interested persons on water resources planning issues related to the preparation of the regional component of the State water plan. Written testimony was accepted until January 20, 2021.

Eight individuals provided either oral or written testimony at the public hearing. No one from the Great Lakes region offered testimony. DEP staff are in the process of summarizing all the comments provided at the public hearing and will provide this information to committee members as soon as completed.

A question was asked how the public meeting was advertised and the response was the hearing was advertised in the Pennsylvania Bulletin. Everyone agreed that few people regularly read the Pennsylvania Bulletin. Committee members will suggest additional ways to broadcast information on future public hearings when they are scheduled.

## **Regional Components and Action Plans**

The DEP staff presented summarized points from previous committee meetings on the region's priorities, uniqueness, stormwater management, climate change, and regional projects showcase. The committee discussed the summarized points and provided feedback, recommended changes, and additional ideas. The discussion produced the following key points for the committee's future discussions.

## **Specific Regional 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 decisions. Pennsylvania should have a voice in federal legislation that impacts the shores of Lake Erie. The 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.

**Region's Uniqueness** - What are the Great Lakes region's unique characteristics that are important considerations in the state water planning?

- Despite its relatively small size the Lake Erie region is a vital economic asset to the Commonwealth.
- The potable water supply is impacted by Canada and other U.S. states which border the Great Lakes.
- The region's economy is reliant on tourism and recreation. Looking to designate Lake Erie waters as a national marine sanctuary site. Would need a dredging channel to ensure continued ship passage.  
<https://nominate.noaa.gov/nominations/>  
<https://www.youerie.com/news/lake-erie-marine-sanctuary-effort-moves-forward/>
- The Great Lakes are used as navigational waters that lead to business and industry - lots of ship born traffic. The transportation of invasive species into the lake changes the distribution of other species and changes the nutrient cycle processes.
- Essentially an unlimited water supply from Lake Erie.
- Opportunity zones and economic development are critical to the region.
- Agriculture, especially vineyards, play a role in the local economy.
- Localized sources of nutrients impact the Great Lakes basin. Fertilizers from farms in Ohio and Michigan are a potential source.

**Stormwater Management** - What are the region's priorities for stormwater and flood management and preserving water quality?

- Stormwater management is critical in the region.
- Since many Act 167 plans are outdated or undersized funding for counties and smaller municipalities to complete Act 167 is needed - stormwater management plans, subdivision and land development regulations, hazard mitigation plans, and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). Are the municipalities following their own requirements?

- Consider changing Best Management Practice (BMP) design standards for storm event frequencies, duration, and return frequencies.
- Assess aging infrastructure for high-frequency storm events, erosion control and filtration. GIS would be helpful for determining capital improvement plans (asset management). MS4 assistance program to digitize.
- Assess impervious areas impact on stormwater, update BMPs, provide guidance on best practices, what works and what does not.
- Infrastructure should be considered a priority and would need to be replaced or expanded; these updates and improvements must be planned, funded, and built to deal with severe rain events.
- Highlight the importance of education and outreach.
- Large impervious areas lead to stream contaminants and water quality issues.
- Bluff recession.
- Handful of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) that still need removal.

**Climate Change** - What are the impacts of climate the region is experiencing now and how do we manage these events in the future?

- Investigate ways that storm frequency and intensity be handled to reduce risks to safety and environmental impacts.
- Investigate impacts extreme levels (can go up and down) of the Great Lakes and the impact on tourism, erosion, and residential communities.
- Consider the implications of flash flooding and potential decreased groundwater recharge on waterway flow.
- Risk of deeper droughts brought on by climate change and steps to promote groundwater infiltration and recharge to maintain aquifers.
- Climate change implications on water supply vulnerability, availability, and reliability.
- Provide alternative best management practices to municipalities.
- Evaluating infrastructure and its capacity is a major concern.
- Focus on science and explicit data to follow trends rather than speculation.

### **Regional Projects Showcase**

- North East Borough has been taking steps to implement Source Water Protection Plans for their region by holding public meetings to increase buy in from their citizens. Conducting contaminant modeling through their intake. DEP, North East Borough, and the Great Lakes Commission teamed up for the study.
- The PA Vested in Environmental Sustainability (PA VinES) is a voluntary program overseen by the Erie County Conservation District. They provide a grower self-assessment workbook aimed at helping vineyards and other agricultural businesses to reduce the amount of sediment and excess nutrients that enter waterways. It is funded by Great Lake Restoration and Growing Greener grants and has grown a lot recently.
- The Erie Sewage Treatment Plant has recently completed several projects ten years in the making. Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) have been eliminated,

- The PA Sea Grant works to promote sustainability in Pennsylvania's ecological and economic coastal and watershed resources. They have been very active in restoration projects for Lake Erie tributaries including a large project on Seven Mile Creek and multiple stream and wetland projects within the watershed.
- Potter County.
- Infrastructure improvements on road drainage and stormwater capture.
- Potential Transportation of Contaminants Study with USGS.
- Pilot study in Lake Erie from Walnut Creek to Presque Isle state park beaches. <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/ofr20161206>  
<https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2016/1206/ofr20161206.pdf>
- Municipal Stormwater Assistance Program (MSAP).
- Assist counties in meeting requirements, digitization of their system. <https://eriecountypa.gov/departments/planning-and-community-development/programs/municipal-stormwater-assistance/>
- Erie County's MSAP was created to help municipalities meet stormwater permit requirements, educate residents and decision makers on stormwater issues, and promote effective planning across the region. This project is being funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Northwest Commission Greenways Block Grant. This funding supports efforts in the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development to assist municipalities in effectively developing and implementing stormwater management programs. Through these efforts, we can encourage collaboration and realize cost savings for our municipalities.
- Erie County Department of Planning offers the following services to our municipalities:
  - Education and outreach: Provide a consistent education message throughout Erie County, so municipalities do not have to duplicate efforts.
  - Data collection, information systems and mapping: Assist municipalities in mapping their infrastructure utilizing GIS. This will allow municipalities to view an interactive map of their stormwater infrastructure and analyze water flow to inform decision making for infrastructure investments.
  - Planning and administrative support: Assist municipalities in organizing information related to their stormwater management programs, which allows for quicker inspections and facilitates information sharing. Work with municipalities to evaluate land development processes and provide recommendations to streamline stormwater management reviews that are required by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.
- Erie County Conservation District – ReLeaf Initiative to plant 275,000 trees by 2025 – one tree per resident. <https://www.releaferie.org/>
- Regional Science Center in Presque Isle Bay.
- Resources to monitor for Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and better understand the conditions in which they pop up over time. <https://eriecountypa.gov/departments/health/what-we-do/beach-sampling-results/harmful-algal-blooms/>

### **References Provided in the Chat**

- US Geological Survey water transport study:  
<https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2016/1206/ofr20161206.pdf>
- <https://www.releaferie.org/>
- The Erie County Department of Health webpage for the HABs initiative: <https://eriecountypa.gov/departments/health/what-we-do/beach-sampling-results/harmful-algal-blooms/>

### **Next Steps**

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

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

- Summary notes from today's discussion will be provided to committee members.
- Statewide Committee will be meeting on March 17, 2021.
- At the next regional committee meeting the committee must elect/re-elect the committee chair and vice-chair as required by the committee's bylaws and Act 220.
- The next meeting of the Great Lakes Regional Committee will be held on April 28, 2021. At this meeting DEP staff are planning to share a story map of water projects completed or in operation since the last State Water Plan update. It will be a virtual meeting.
- Future meetings will be held on July 28 and October 27, 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 by Chair Palmer.