



**State Water Plan Update
Upper Middle Susquehanna Water Resources Regional Committee
Meeting**

April 29, 2021
9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members in Attendance:

Patrick Burke	Shannon Rossman
Jared Dressler	Robert Shannon
Andrew Gavin	Jerry Walls
Todd Giddings	Wendy Walter
Andrew Gutshall	Jennifer Whisner
Dennis Hameister	John Yamona
Kurt Hausammann	Cathy Yeakel
Russell James	
Beth Kern	

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Steven Barondeau
Paul Heasley
Prasenjit Mitra
Jim Weaver

Others in Attendance:

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

Visitors:

None

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. Jerry Walls, Committee Chair, welcomed Committee members to the meeting and completed a roll call for attendance.

Public Comment

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

Jerry Walls, Chair, provided information on the growing interest in large scale solar farms within the region and throughout Pennsylvania. A solar farm has been proposed to be built in Clinton County on 3,200 acres of forest land and it is proposed to clear cut the land. This will create problems for storm run-off into the Susquehanna basin. Jared Dressler, DEP staff member, stated the site is a proposed project and DEP has not received any permit applications for the project. A NPDES permit will be required.

Jerry added that other large solar farms are being proposed in the PA Wilds area and Northumberland County. Dennis Hameister added that solar farms are proposed in Franklin and Centre counties.

The Committee recommendation is that solar farms should be placed on unproductive farmland or abandoned mine and brown field areas. Russel James volunteered to develop a draft policy recommendation on solar farms that could be included in the state water plan. Shannon Rossman volunteered to assist in the development of the document and the document will be shared with all Committee members and included in the July agenda for discussion.

Minutes

The minutes of the January 28, 2021 meeting were approved as presented on a Dennis Hameister / Todd Giddings motion. The vote was completed by a voice vote.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Bylaws of the Upper/Middle Susquehanna Regional Committee require an annual election of the Committee Chair and Vice-Chair positions. Chair Walls opened the meeting for discussion and asked for nominations for both the Chair and Vice-Chair positions.

A Jerry Walls / Dennis Hameister motion was unanimously approved to elect Shannon Rossman to the Chair position for the Committee.

A Shannon Rossman / Dennis Hameister motion was unanimously approved to elect Jerry Walls to the Vice-Chair position for the Committee.

DEP State Water Plan Update

Kristina Peacock-Jones gave the Committee an update of what DEP is working on regarding the State Water Plan Update.

The USGS Water Use Data and Research (WUDR) grant data sharing projects are progressing well. The project for improving Chapter 110 data input is complete and will be deployed soon. 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 second quarter of 2021.

The fifth Statewide Committee meeting is May 19, 2021.

Public Hearing Summary

Mark Matlock informed the Committee that a public hearing on the statewide water plan was held on January 6, 2021. The January 6, 2021 hearing was advertised in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on December 26, 2020 and all sunshine requirements were met. Each Committee's hearing was held for one hour via Microsoft Teams. The purpose of the hearing was to solicit comments from interested persons on water resources planning issues related to preparation of the regional component of the State Water Plan. Written comments were accepted by the Committees on or before January 20, 2021. The following public comments were offered:

- Delaware Water Resources Committee – 9:00am – no participants
- Lower Susquehanna Water Resources Committee – 10:00am – one participant
- Potomac Water Resources Committee – 11:00am – no participants
- Ohio Water Resources Committee – 1:00pm – nine participants
- Great Lakes Water Resources Committee – 2:00pm – no participants
- Upper/Middle Susquehanna Water Resources Committee – 3:00pm – one participant

Mark reviewed who the individuals or organizations were that presented comments and provided a brief synopsis of the comments. The individual presenting testimony in the Upper/Middle Susquehanna Region also provided the same testimony in the Ohio Region. The comments from the public hearing are being integrated into each region's priorities. The Committee members have received a complete written transcript of the comments provided through the public hearing.

Regional Priorities

Mark Matlock, DEP staff, presented draft statements of the Lower Susquehanna Regions priorities to be included in the update State Water Plan. The draft priorities were created from previous ideas, discussions, and prioritization by the Committee. The draft priorities presented were:

Protect important headwater habitats and recharge areas of the Upper/Middle Susquehanna basin

To care for the water resources in the Upper/Middle Susquehanna basin and ensure a sustainable supply of quality water, important headwater habitats and groundwater recharge areas must be protected. Because much of the basin is forested, the approach should focus on forested land use practices and their effect on area water supplies. Minimizing large scale forest cutting is a priority to mitigate flooding. Addressing legacy infrastructure in acid mine drainage areas is also critical to protecting important headwaters and streams. Committee members recognize a different approach must be

taken to addressing water quantity and quality issues between rural and urban/suburban areas within the region. Rural areas strive to protect forest lands, preserve recreation areas and greenways, and protect critical habitat areas. Suburban and urban areas prioritize replacement of existing aging infrastructure, addressing abandoned malls and big-box stores, as well as their associated parking and paved areas contributing to stormwater run-off.

Working collaboratively with various interest groups (county and municipal government, conservation districts, and watershed associations) through education and outreach efforts is essential to advancing sound land use practices that are protective of these headwater areas. As part of a strategy to accomplish this, local governments can promote appropriate zoning ordinances in public water supply recharge areas, which is particularly important in areas with limited availability of quality water. The Committee also recommends that water well construction standards be implemented, particularly related to residential well drilling and geothermal bore holes, which will protect and sustain groundwater quality and availability.

Multi-municipal planning and coordination

Land use planning and development are critical for protecting headwater habitats. Planning efforts need to be expanded to county wide action plans and integrated water resources management throughout a watershed district. A regional, as opposed to municipal or local, approach of education and outreach to water resource stakeholders, emphasizing the value of coordinated water quality and quantity planning, is critical to protecting all communities. Committee members recognize that parts of the region have experienced a decline in population and many smaller communities are challenged economically. Multi-municipal planning coordination enhances success in preserving water quality and optimizes the use of funding dollars.

The draft priorities were discussed in depth by Committee members and revisions were made to the draft statements and new ideas added to clarify the statements. The revised priorities for the Great Lakes Region follow:

Protect important headwater habitats, enhance recharge areas, and minimize stormwater runoff of the Upper/Middle Susquehanna basin

To care for the water resources in the Upper/Middle Susquehanna basin and ensure a sustainable supply of quality water, important headwater habitats and groundwater recharge areas must be protected. Because much of the basin is forested, the approach should focus on forested land use practices and their effect on area water supplies. Minimizing large scale forest cutting is a priority to mitigate downstream flooding, preserve forested ecosystem services, and reduce sedimentation. Addressing legacy infrastructure in acid mine drainage areas is also critical to protecting important headwaters and streams. We strongly encourage reuse of degraded/abandoned land such as available industrial or commercial lands. Committee members recognize a different approach must be taken to address water quantity and quality issues between rural and

urban/suburban areas within the region. Rural areas strive to protect forest lands, preserve recreation areas and greenways, and protect critical habitat areas. Stormwater quality and quantity concerns in suburban and urban areas may be addressed with green infrastructure through zoning ordinance changes for underutilized and/or vacant commercial property, as well as their associated parking and paved areas.

Working collaboratively with stakeholders including state, county, and municipal government, conservation districts, and watershed associations through education and outreach efforts is essential to advancing sound land use practices that are protective of these headwater areas. As part of a strategy to accomplish this, local governments can promote appropriate municipal ordinances in public water supply recharge areas, which is particularly important in areas with limited availability of quality water. The Committee also recommends that statewide water well construction standards be implemented, particularly related to residential well drilling and geothermal bore holes, which will protect and sustain groundwater quality and availability.

Multi-municipal planning and coordination

Land use planning and development are critical to protect headwater habitats, enhance recharge areas, and minimize stormwater runoff. Planning needs to expand with county wide action plans and integrated water resources management throughout a watershed. A regional approach of education and outreach to water resource stakeholders, emphasizing the value of coordinated water quality and quantity planning among municipalities, is critical to protecting all communities. Continue to prioritize upgrading existing aging water infrastructure to maintain water quality, recognizing that parts of the region have experienced a decline in population and as a result many communities are challenged economically. Multi-municipal planning coordination enhances success in preserving water quality and optimizes the use of funding dollars.

A Shannon Rossman / Kurt Hausammann motion to approve the revised “Protect important headwater habitats and recharge areas of the Upper/Middle Susquehanna basin” priority statement was unanimously approved.

A Dennis Hameister / Shannon Rossman motion to approve the revised “Multi-municipal planning and coordination” priority statement was unanimously approved.

A Pat Burke / Todd Giddings motion to retain the original order of the priorities was unanimously approved. The order of the priorities should be:

- 1. Protect important headwater habitats, enhance recharge areas, and minimize stormwater runoff of the Upper/Middle Susquehanna basin**
- 2. Multi-municipal planning and coordination**

Next Steps

Chair Walls 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.
- The priorities will be shared with the Statewide Committee for approval and inclusion in the State Water Plan.
- Statewide Committee will be meeting on May 19, 2021.
- The next meeting of the Upper/Middle Regional Committee will be held on July 29, 2021. At this meeting it is planned to show the plan's Story Map for the region. The agenda will also include a discussion of education and outreach initiatives to share the State Water plan and regional priorities. July will be a virtual meeting.
- Future meetings are scheduled for October 28.

The following organizations were identified by Jerry Walls as possible partners in outreach and education for the state water plan.

- Penn State Extension
- County Conservation Districts
- PA chapter of the American Planning Association
- PSATS – Pennsylvania State Association of township Supervisors
- PSAB – Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs
- County Commissioners Association
- PA Rural Water Association
- PA Municipal Authority Association

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 11:35 a.m.