



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

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

Committee Members in Attendance:

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Stephen Barondeau | Beth Kern |
| Patrick Burke | Rhonda Manning |
| Jared Dressler | Tony Maury |
| Andrew Gavin | Shannon Rossman |
| Todd Giddings | Jerry Walls |
| Dennis Hameister | Wendy Walter |
| Kurt Hausammann | Jennifer Whisner |

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Andrew Gutshall | Robert D. Shannon |
| Paul Heasley | Jim Weaver |
| Russell James | Cathy Yeakel |
| Prasenjit Mitra | |

Others in Attendance:

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Kristina Peacock-Jones - DEP | Monica Gould - Strategic Consulting Partners |
| Mark Matlock - DEP | Bob Whitmore - Strategic Consulting Partners |
| Mike Hill - DEP | |

Visitors:

Corey Rilk

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. Shannon Rossman, Committee Chair, welcomed committee members to the meeting and completed a roll call for attendance.

Public Comment

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

Chair Rossman provided an information handout prepared on the recommended locations for solar farms and the impact of deforestation when solar farms clear cut forests. The handout was reviewed and edited by committee members. The revised information handout follows:

Solar Farms

Solar power is a great renewable energy and a way to reduce our dependence upon fossil fuels. However, it does not come without some land use and environmental issues that must be taken under careful consideration when deciding the appropriate placement, especially for larger mass energy production facilities.

Placement:

Solar farms are best placed on:

- Agriculture land with least productive soils, preferably on large animal production structures, accessory structures or where the land is not removed from farming activity (pasture)
- Co-location on parking lots and large rooftops, such as warehouses or other large facilities.
- Brownfields or other land that has been disturbed and has limited reuse, such as coal refuse land (surface and subsurface development rights)

Environmental Issues

While solar farms are a renewable energy source, there are concerns when they are constructed in areas that may cause increased water quality or other environmental issues. The clearcutting of large, forested lands should be avoided to all extent possible. Removal of forestlands has a detrimental effect upon water quality and air quality. Development of solar farms should address the following items with regard to water quality:

- Sediment
- Nutrient reductions (similar to stormwater management requirements the nutrients running off of the land should be equal to or less than pre-development)
- Stormwater velocity, quantity, and increased flood potential
- Deforestation will increase stream temperatures and air temperatures in the surrounding area
- Water recharge reduction due to increased runoff

Renewable energy resources are extremely important for our future independence from fossil fuels. However, they must be developed in a way that causes as little environmental effects as possible.

The committee requested the solar farms handout be provided to the Statewide Committee for their consideration and inclusion in the Statewide Committee workgroups.

Minutes

The minutes of the April 29, 2021, meeting was approved as presented on a Dennis Hameister / Kurt Hausammann motion. The vote was completed by a voice vote.

New Members

Mark Matlock added that two new members have joined the Upper/Middle Susquehanna Regional Committee.

- Rhonda Manning
- Tony Maury

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 moving Chapter 110 water use registration forms from paper to online is nearly complete and will be deployed soon. The project involving data sharing between agencies (SRBC, DRBC, and USGS) is in the testing phase. The project should be fully operational by the end of this summer. The Power BI report summarizing water use data will be public on our website soon. The sixth Statewide Committee meeting was held on July 21, 2021.

Story Map

DEP staff are preparing a story map of the state water planning process. Plans were to show the story map at this meeting, but internal technical problems are preventing the story map from being uploaded for showing. The story map will hopefully be revealed to the committees in October.

Regional Priorities

Regional Priorities

Mark Matlock, DEP staff, presented and briefly reviewed draft statements developed by all the regional committees. The draft priorities were shared with the Statewide Committee at their meeting in May. The Statewide Committee asked each regional committee to review their draft priorities and provide more details or specifics if possible. The draft priorities developed by the Upper/Middle Susquehanna Regional Committee are:

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.

After a thoughtful review and discussion on the priorities, committee members made slight wording revisions to the priorities and the revised priorities follow:

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The revised priority changes were unanimously accepted on a Pat Burke / Jerry Walls motion.

Education and Outreach

Committee members have been given an opportunity to participate in an online survey to answer questions regarding how education and outreach of the state water plan should be achieved. Summary comments provided by survey participants were shared with the

committee. A discussion followed on each survey question and committee members added additional comments. The summary survey data and additional comments provided by the committee members follow (committee's additional comments are in red). Additional surveys continue to be completed and the total number of responses is now 47.

Survey Responses by Region

- Delaware – 11
- Great Lakes – 8
- Lower Susquehanna – 5
- Ohio – 4
- Potomac – 4
- Upper/Middle Susquehanna – 10

Total responses – 42

Why is it important to conduct education and outreach on the state water plan?

- People buy-in to a plan if they understand why their involvement is important
- To educate on the importance, value, and challenges facing our water resources
- To gain public long-term support and investment for water projects that benefit the region
- Why we need to plan for the allocation, protection, and future of water
- Awareness and knowledge of issues and remediation efforts
- Public is aware of the plan, initiatives, and goals
- Find local solutions
- Transparency and broad-based citizen input
- Education and outreach prevent negative information being provided
- People do not understand the scope of the impairment in our watersheds
- To inform decision makers of water resource issues that need to be addressed
- Identifying local priorities
- Investment in water resources = wise economic strategy
- Connection between water resources protection and climate change
- Public should be informed on the direction and scope of the state water plan
- Communicating the most important components of the plan to community stakeholders should help with goals being met, widespread plan acceptance and a desire to create positive change
- Funded with taxpayer dollars
- Highlight successes, challenges, and data needs
- Plan could affect stakeholders not involved in the development of the plan
- To build coordination with planners at the local and county level
- To ensure all citizens are aware of the issues and reinforce the importance of water availability and protection
- Public awareness and buy-in
- **Convince state legislatures who control the appropriations, so the proper resources are distributed to accomplish these goals**
- **Educate on Integrated Water Resource Management as everything ties together**

- Change the regulations for the newer issues that are arising
- Water treatment plan water, beneficial reuse program

Who should we educate on the plan?

- Students and teachers
- Elected officials – local, counties, and state
- Public, every Pennsylvania resident
- County Conservation Districts
- County Planning
- Developers
- Environmental groups
- Engineers
- Watershed organizations
- Farmers
- Industrial, agricultural, recreation users
- State associations
- All water users
- Sewer and water authorities
- Water resources professionals
- State legislative offices
- Local community advocates
- State and regional water associations
- Schools, universities, elementary and high school students
- Volunteer groups
- **Manufacturers – roofing materials, construction materials, etc. (more ecologically friendly)**
- **Conservancies (stream bank restoration, agricultural practices – cost avoidance strategies)**
- **Professional Organizations for all of the above**

How should the key messages of the state water plan be communicated to the public and to specific interest groups?

- Written materials for municipalities
- Go to the people, do not make them come to you
- Work through schools, colleges, conservancies, conservation districts and watershed organizations.
- Business groups, chambers, and economic development organizations
- Educational materials for the public
- Targeted messages
- Easily understood, visually appealing elevator speeches
- Website; internet marketing with links to website; story map
- Social media
- Regional meetings, webinars, workshops
- Direct written correspondence to planning agencies, municipal governments

- One pager visual appealing marketing and information brochure with links that can be sent to everyone involved in water resources
- Series of newspaper articles and fact sheets; one page newspaper spread
- Watershed specialists in each conservation district (Growing Greener model)
- In person events with follow-up links to website and social media
- Through groups that already exist – Water Resources Association of the Delaware River Basin, The Water Circle (Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission), Delaware River Watershed Initiative network
- Web accessible graphics, documents, maps
- Public TV
- Recreational associations
- Summary of the plan that can be handed out
- Interactive
- Sample policy ordinances (storage area for all to see would be good)
- Water resources education network – centralized network for materials to share and spread information.
- Sewer and Water Authorities/providers
- State Planning Board – flooding and how it relates to nature-based solutions and will help with quantity etc.
- State Association of Municipal Solicitors (legal community)
- State Association of Municipal Engineers

What is DEP staff's role in education and outreach?

- Leadership role in all aspects of education and outreach
- Develop and fine tune the message
- Support the development and distribution of materials
- Develop a written strategy and campaign for education and training
- Manage the curriculum, presentation materials and keep it up to date
- Coordination and providing of resources
- Technical advisor/**assistance**
- Education and training to key stakeholders
- Coordinate the website
- Creators of the information to be shared
- Provide direction and support to regional/local facilitators to engage the public
- Organize meetings
- Coordinating and funding
- Educate their own staff on the issues
- Developers / coordinators / facilitators of the plan
- Arrange workshop speakers, create informational materials, coordinate educational events
- Provide current and timely data and resources for all regions
- Provide resources to get the information out
- **More staff available to provide education and outreach**

- Distribution of data. How/where to find documents since website are/have changed. (more centralized locations)
- Contact person(s) – keep up to date

What should the regional committee's role be in education and outreach?

- Take the message to the people
- Identify key stakeholders within the region
- Be present at local presentations by DEP and provide input
- Support the development and distribution of messages
- Organize local / regional forums to bring key planners and the public together
- Provide technical expertise and local examples of adverse conditions or solutions to problems
- Write newspaper articles, meet with local and state elected officials
- Organize regional forums
- Emphasize issues pertaining to local areas
- Connectors to different organizations
- Local representative of the plan
- Coordinating at a local level
- Provide local examples of the need for the plan
- Help to develop materials
- Coordination with other local planning organizations
- Take the state concepts and plan and transferring it to local impact
- Possibly a local resource for Q&A
- PA Municipal Planning Education Institute – Through the Boroughs Association (group of professionals that develop a presentation and present to the public) – consistent message
- Penn State Extension – webinars
- Master Gardeners – Master Well Owner Network (MWON) – Master Watershed Program – PA Well Drillers (PA Groundwater Association)
- State Grange (farming community)
- PA Farm Bureau

What resources are needed to be able to deliver and facilitate an education workshop to the community?

- Local venues, media advertising
- Targeted messaging materials
- Fund a signature capital project in each watershed and promote it
- Funding to organize and deliver education and training programs
- Power point presentation
- Ability to conduct a virtual meeting
- Technical experts – Media and marketing experts
- Social media – videos etc.
- Local town hall meetings
- One page fact sheet, executive summary

- Comprehensive marketing strategy for each initiative
- Financial resources
- Webinars
- Centralized material location (promulgater)
- GIS data - collected and available to everyone on all the issues
- How to get your permit, how it is processed (education on permit process)

As a regional committee member, are you willing to participate in education and outreach within your region? (Scale of 1 (no) to 7 (absolutely))

- Average score = 5.40

Should DEP prepare a comprehensive workshop presentation that can be used by regional committee members (Scale of 1 (no) to 7 (absolutely))?

- Average score = 5.79

Additional comments

- Publicity is essential
- Having a presentation available would provide an open invitation to view the work of the state water plan resources committees
- The Commonwealth should have legislative and executive support on this plan to be successful (point of contact); encourage economic information etc. on water
- Keep educational material concise and to the point
- Plan needs to include what involvement we want from different stakeholder groups
- Need to convey the economic value and importance of investments and work to plan and protect our water resources
- Plan must be clear and compelling to the target audience, cannot be seen as regulatory or over burdensome
- Workshops should be tailored to regional priorities
- Educational level of the audience

Next Steps

Chair Rossman 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.
- Committee members terms expire on a rotating basis with 1/3 of the members' terms ending in September. Mark will begin the reappointment process and committee members who terms are expiring should let him know if they do not want to be reappointed.
- The next Upper/Middle Susquehanna Regional meeting will be held on October 28, 2021. The meeting will be a virtual meeting on Microsoft Teams.

- Committee members should decide in October if they want meetings in 2022 to be in-person or virtual meetings.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 11:18 a.m.