

Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Infrastructure Challenges

Background: Pennsylvania's water supply, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure systems, which are critical to protecting public health, the environment and economic vitality, face enormous and growing challenges. The American Society of Civil Engineers 2014 Report Card for Pennsylvania's Infrastructure gives the Commonwealth's water-related infrastructure grades of D, D- and D+ respectively. It has been estimated that drinking water infrastructure requires an estimated investment of \$13.9 billion over the next 20 years to replace aging facilities and comply with drinking water regulations. Aging wastewater management systems discharge billions of gallons of untreated or undertreated wastewater into Pennsylvania surface waters, while the Commonwealth has the greatest number of combined sewer overflows of any state. The Commonwealth must invest an estimated \$28 billion over next 20 years to repair existing wastewater systems, upgrade to meet clean water standards and build or expand systems to meet increasing demands.

Pennsylvania's Challenges: Pennsylvania's water-related infrastructure challenges are not new, but they are growing. To address these challenges, then-Governor Ed Rendell created the Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force ("Task Force"), which was charged with assessing the Commonwealth's infrastructure needs, examining financing strategies to make such improvements, promoting operational efficiencies, and evaluating the benefits of regionalization of systems and management functions. The Task Force's 2008 report, *Creating a Sustainable Solution for Pennsylvania*, provides a series of cogent recommendations which remain just as valid today as when issued.

In order to make the required improvements, the Task Force recommended that water and wastewater providers begin charging the full cost of service for these vital utilities. For many years, customers in many systems have not been paying the full or actual costs of receiving water and wastewater service. The Task Force recognized that the effort to promote full cost of service needed to also recognize the ability of customers to pay increased charges. For all customers, it was essential that education about the value and cost of drinking water and wastewater service be provided.

The Task Force also recommended regionalization and rightsizing of systems. Public-private partnerships and incentives for projects promoting regional cooperation were endorsed. At the same time, water and wastewater systems should be required to prepare long-term asset management plans and all systems should be required to establish a repair and replacement fund to expedite replacement when funds become available. Systems should also be encouraged to undertake efforts to increase efficiencies in their facilities.

Funding is and clearly will remain a challenge. The Task Force recommended certain targeted increases in federal and state assistance. Specifically, it was recommended that the Commonwealth support increases to the state revolving funds under the federal Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Acts.

Since the publication of the Task Force's recommendations, while some progress has been made in terms of providing technical assistance and guidance to water and wastewater system operators, the infrastructure challenge has grown. Most disturbingly, Pennsylvania failed to make progress since ASCE's 2010 report card.

Policy Considerations: Recognizing that federal and state budgetary resources are constrained, the CAC notes the critical need for renewed investments in our water-related infrastructure. Such investments are essential to support jobs and a sustainable economy, as well as provide for healthy environment. DEP and other involved Commonwealth agencies should rededicate themselves to implementing the recommendations of the Sustainable Infrastructure Task Force.