

Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force Public Input – We want to hear from you!!!

Pennsylvania has approximately 7700 water and wastewater systems, many of which are small. Each system is unique. They were planned, designed built and modified at local direction over many years. Some are in good shape, having benefited from quality construction, good maintenance, and regular investments over time. Most, however, need major renewals in the coming decades. Some also need major investment to deal with new treatment standards, which adds to the financial stresses of also having to deal with old hardware. This “water infrastructure” is key to public health, environmental quality, and economic development.

Over the years, a number of state and federal funding programs have provided a significant amount of financial assistance towards the construction and upgrade of the Commonwealth’s water infrastructure. Between 2003 and 2006, these financing programs provided approximately \$1.4 billion in loans and grants for this purpose. However, the 2003 EPA Drinking Water Needs Survey and the 2004 Clean Water Needs Survey estimate Pennsylvania’s total water infrastructure need at over \$22 billion; \$11 billion for drinking water, \$7 billion for wastewater treatment and \$5 billion for stormwater management. The true needs are surely much higher, because data collected for the Needs Surveys includes only work which is planned and well-documented by local officials. These programs will never be able to address the total financial need for the long-term capital improvement, operation and maintenance of these systems. Existing funding programs are therefore important, but cannot be expected to meet all critical needs.

Recognizing the importance of the Commonwealth’s water infrastructure, Governor Edward G. Rendell signed an Executive Order commissioning a Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force. This task force has 30 members comprised of representatives of local and state government, the water and wastewater treatment industry and the state legislature. They are tasked with submitting a final report to the Governor by October 1 that identifies the following:

- ✓ The “gap” between financial need and available resources
- ✓ Cost savings due to non-structural alternatives such as:
 1. Trading
 2. The installation of best management practices such as forested riparian buffers as part of a watershed approach
 3. The use of water conservation and energy efficiency practices
 4. Collaboration and partnerships for effective governmental planning and the sharing of resources
- ✓ Actual costs for providing services
- ✓ Recommendations for promoting components of Sustainable Infrastructure including:
 1. Better Management, Effective Management, or Asset Management
 2. Infrastructure Financing – Including financial assistance programs and the establishment of a full-cost pricing framework
 3. System Efficiency – Optimized operation and the implementation of water and energy conservation measures
 4. Watershed Approach – Innovative solutions; such as trading, regionalization and integrated water resource planning

To insure the Task Force has as much information as possible to accomplish this task, they have developed a series of questions they are asking your assistance in answering. These questions are attached. You can provide written comments or register to provide testimony at any one of the public meetings listed below by e-mailing the Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force at:

RA-sitaskforce@state.pa.us

We look forward to hearing from you. Deadline for submittal of your comments is **June 1, 2008**.

Thursday, May 8

Chairman: Secretary Kathleen McGinty
Time: 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Location: Room 105, RCSOB
Harrisburg

Thursday, May 15

Chairman: Mr. George Crum
Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Best Western Pottstown Inn
Lincoln Room
1600 Industrial Highway
Pottstown

Monday, May 19

Chairman: Senator James Ferlo
Time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Location: Carnegie Mellon University Campus
University Center (Building #28)
Connan Room
5000 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh

For parking at Carnegie Mellon, enter access code **124696** at gate entrance. Upon leaving, don't stop at the pay station, just use the same code at the exit gate key pad.

Wednesday, May 21

Chairs: Senator Mary Jo White and
Rep. Scott Hutchinson
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Location: Clarion University Venango Campus
Robert W. Rhoades Center
Rhoades Auditorium
1801 W. First Street
Oil City

Thursday, May 22

Chairman: Rep. Bud George
Time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Location: Clarion Hotel Dubois
Terrace Room
1896 Rich Highway
Dubois

Tuesday, May 27

Chairman: Senator Raphael Musto
Time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Location: Convention Hall, Crown Room
1073 Oak Street
Pittston Twp.

Wednesday, May 28

Chairman: Rep. Bob Freeman
Time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Location: City of Bethlehem
City Hall, Town Hall Room
10 E. Church Street
Bethlehem

Thursday, May 29

Chairman: Rep. Stan Saylor
Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Mazie Gable Elementary Schedule
100 E. Prospect Street
Red Lion

Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force Questions

Needs Assessment

- What are the total infrastructure financing needs, and what are the causes for those needs?
- Should we include in our needs assessment non-capital costs?
- Should we be taking affordability into account in estimating financing needs? In other words, how should we factor in that some communities can afford a higher percentage of the total financing need than other communities?

Innovative Measures:

- What are the types of new technologies or treatment concepts and non-structural alternatives available to improve water quality in lieu of infrastructure? What is their effectiveness? What are the costs and benefits?
- What other types of non-structural solutions are available to enhance system planning efforts? How can they be incorporated into a system's planning process? How can trading, water conservation and reuse strategies be incorporated into this planning process?

Financial Resources:

- What aspects of the operation of a water or wastewater system should be eligible for subsidized funding from the local, state or federal government? How about onlot system management and the promotion of community sewage management programs?

Financial Sustainability:

- What methods and tools should be developed to assist water and wastewater systems in delivering cost-effective service while maintaining public health, safety and environmental standards?
- Are there specific workforce and management training programs that should be developed to assist water and wastewater system staff to more effectively operate and manage their systems?
- What methods can be employed to encourage cost-effective sizing of systems, including regionalization or decentralization? Are there specific incentives that would be necessary to facilitate this approach? Does regionalization to create efficiencies of scale make sense generally, or only in certain circumstances?

- What eligibility criteria would you apply if additional state financing was devoted to water infrastructure?

Legislative and Regulatory Issues:

- What are the statutory and regulatory barriers to enhancing our infrastructure improvement efforts within the Commonwealth while still protecting public health and the environment?
- Through the legislative or regulatory process, what can be done to encourage greater local investment in infrastructure and eliminate or lessen the cost of providing infrastructure improvements?

General:

- Aside from the issues identified above, are there other issues are you facing that you think the Task Force should consider?
- What recommendations do you have for the Task Force to address these issues?