

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 8, 2008

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Department of Environmental Protection
Commonwealth News Bureau
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GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON PA'S WATER INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS; ANNOUNCES DATES OF 8 PUBLIC MEETINGS

HARRISBURG – With aging and deteriorating water systems across Pennsylvania in need of critical investments, members of Governor Edward G. Rendell's Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force are setting out to gather the public's ideas on how to address the challenge.

During a meeting today, the task force announced a series of eight public meetings to be held throughout the state this month.

“Safe, reliable drinking water and effective wastewater treatment systems are paramount to the health and welfare of our citizens, as well as the vibrancy of our economy,” said Environmental Protection Secretary Kathleen McGinty, who chairs the task force. “With Pennsylvania facing a nearly \$20 billion funding shortfall to upgrade our water-related infrastructure, we must find alternatives to expensive capital construction projects. This issue impacts every community, every business and every citizen of the commonwealth, and that's why their input is essential.”

The 30-member task force, made up of business leaders, legislators, government officials and industry experts, will host eight public meetings during May, the first kicking off today in

Harrisburg. The other meetings will take place in Allegheny, Clearfield, Luzerne, Montgomery, Northampton, Venango and York counties.

Members want to hear recommendations from the public about what issues the task force should consider; what existing statutory, regulatory or public policy barriers prevent the long-term sustainability of Pennsylvania's water infrastructure; and possible new revenue streams that could help meet the state's infrastructure needs.

Thirteen people testified at today's meeting, including representatives of utility contractors, financial management companies, water resources groups and municipal authorities.

According to a federal Clean Water Needs Survey, Pennsylvania is facing nearly \$11 billion in unmet drinking water infrastructure needs and at least \$7.2 billion in unmet wastewater infrastructure needs.

Governor Rendell created the task force with Executive Order 2008-02 and charged members with developing a report by Oct. 1 that provides recommendations and financing options that may support water-related services in the Governor's fiscal year 2009-10 budget proposal.

The task force convened for the first time last month and formed five work groups to address the most pressing issues: needs assessment, innovative measures, financial resources, financial sustainability and legislative and regulatory needs.

For more information about the task force, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Water Management, then click on the task force link at left.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the list of Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force public meetings.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

May 15 – 6 p.m.-8 p.m., Lincoln Room, Best Western Inn, 1600 Industrial Highway, Pottstown.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

May 19 – 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m., Connan Room, University Center (Building #28), Carnegie Mellon University, 500 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh.

VENANGO COUNTY

May 21 – 1 p.m.-3 p.m., Rhoades Auditorium, Robert W. Rhoades Center, Clarion University Venango Campus, 1801 W. First St., Oil City.

CLEARFIELD COUNTY

May 22 – 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m., Terrace Room, Clarion Hotel DuBois, 1896 Rich Highway, DuBois.

LUZERNE COUNTY

May 27 – 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m., Crown Room, Convention Hall, 1073 Oak St., Pittston.

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

May 28 – 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m., Town Hall Room, Bethlehem City Hall, 10 E. Church St., Bethlehem.

YORK COUNTY

May 29 – 6 p.m.-8 p.m., Mazie Gable Elementary School, 100 E. Prospect St., Red Lion.