

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

Needs Assessment

- What are the total infrastructure financing needs, and what are the causes for those needs?  
The lack of attention and proper maintenance of existing infrastructure has been compounded by sprawling land use and will continue to be over shadowed as new infrastructure is permitted beyond reasonable growth areas.
  
- Should we include in our needs assessment non-capital costs?  
Yes, but certain estimates would be sufficient.
  
- 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?  
It would seem that most communities with the oldest of infrastructure would have the least amount of financing ability. Surely estimations could be made for individual affordability.

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?  
Trees, riparian buffers, and other BMP's are readily available, quite effective when preserved or implemented, and can cost far less than newer treatment technology and structural alternatives.
  
- 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?  
Existing regulations need to be supported and enforced in order to enhance any planning efforts. Any progressive strategies cannot continue to be offset by waivers, variances, zoning accommodations, comprehensive plan inconsistencies, and other municipal approvals that undermine these ongoing infrastructure planning efforts. Furthermore, the MPC needs to coordinate water supply, waste water, and storm water in order to address these issues.

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?  
Older and existing infrastructure should be given the highest priority for subsidized funding. Onlot system management is getting some needed attention through the desires for Act 537 plan approvals.

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?  
Recognition of the true costs and projections for such systems would enhance the level of services and standards. These financial matters are often determined with conflicts of interest and little objectivity.

- 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?  
More objective municipal and authority Board participation and oversight would be beneficial to the performance of not only the staff, but of the professional consultants as well.
- 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?  
The MPC was updated to enhance such regionalized incentives, but maybe the financial incentives need to be more evident to all of the stakeholders in these communities. Once the competing interests for infrastructure approvals realize the limitations of resources and expansion, there should be more awareness and opportunity for cooperative efforts.
- What eligibility criteria would you apply if additional state financing was devoted to water infrastructure?  
Public water infrastructure financing should be prioritized by certain growth areas which would be consistent and supported by updated county comprehensive plans.

#### 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?  
There is currently no coordination of public water and sewer planning. It is not mandatory for public sewer to be consistent with updated comprehensive plans. Currently, a sewer planning module can be granted approval with a simple letter stating that public water can be provided even if such public water lines are miles away or the water comes from another watershed.
- 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?  
Enforce the regulations on the sprawling new construction and bring the investments back within reasonable growth areas by requiring consistency with updated comprehensive planning. The state agencies need the support of all levels of political leadership to help them.

#### General:

- Aside from the issues identified above, are there other issues are you facing that you think the Task Force should consider?  
Encourage more public participation and extend public comment periods to the duration of open checklist items on permit applications. The Open Records update should be helpful to the process. Once the public has these opportunities, the trends in the courts should reverse.
- What recommendations do you have for the Task Force to address these issues?  
Take a closer look at the individual approval process where municipal staff members have been less than honest and developers' professionals have been known to provide the services for the authorities and municipalities to the extent of drafting the municipal zoning changes, creating Act 537 plans, responding to the agency review letters, answering public comments on municipal letterhead, affecting the selection of municipal planning commission members, influencing municipal staff conduct, discouraging public participation, and threatening to appeal or force curative amendments if approvals aren't granted, etc.