

The Honorable John Quigley  
Office of the Secretary  
Rachel Carson State Office Building  
400 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

February 4, 2016

Dear Secretary Quigley:

The Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) is a key player in ensuring that the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority's (ALCOSAN) investment to fix this region's aging sewer system meets regulatory standards, is cost effective, and meets the needs of the 83 municipalities in the service region. Our region is close to achieving a finalized Consent Decree with the Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and the Department of Justice (DOJ), but **without action to explicitly encourage coordination at the municipal level, the implementation of this plan will fall far short of the vision County Executive Fitzgerald, Mayor Peduto, and tens of thousands of ratepayers have for this once in a lifetime investment.**

The steps your office has taken so far have been critical to getting our region to this point. The 18-month extension to municipal Consent Orders was fundamental in giving municipalities time to develop source control plans that maximize green infrastructure and investment in our communities. Unfortunately, what has been missing is a scientific, regional analysis using a strategic approach to siting green infrastructure to maximize flow reduction—ALCOSAN has never completed such a study.

Through their multi-municipal work along the Route 51 corridor, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) and the City of Pittsburgh have served as a model for what collaboration on controlling sewer overflows through source reduction across municipal boundaries could look like. The City and PWSA are also pulling together municipalities to complete a regional study of the potential for source reduction and green infrastructure to reduce sewer overflows, which would, for the first time ever, provide our region with a strategic analysis of the possibilities and potential for a system-wide application of green infrastructure.

At the same time, PWSA and the City of Pittsburgh are struggling to get commitments from other municipalities to participate in this study. I have heard from others working on this issue that Dana Aunkst gave verbal confirmation that one goal of the Consent Order extensions was to encourage municipalities to enter into joint analyses and projects to satisfy PA DEP requirements, but some municipalities have not considered this a strong enough guarantee to commit to PWSA's study.

Our region needs a public, definitive statement from PA DEP to shift the perception of municipal officials. **Will your office send a letter to all municipalities, including elected officials, covered by Consent Orders detailing that participation in the PWSA regional analysis of source reduction and green infrastructure will satisfy the “project and study” terms of the municipal Consent Orders?**

Alternatively, PWSA has expressed that if they received such a letter from PA DEP that PWSA could share this letter with municipal officials.

Without such a statement, it is likely that municipalities will continue to plan in isolation and a critical opportunity will be missed to encourage a regional solution to our region’s sewer overflow problem. Further, I would encourage you to include both Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) and Separated Sewer Overflow (SSO) municipalities in such a statement. Water does not recognize municipal boundaries, and much of the stormwater in CSO communities flows downhill from SSO communities—both need to be required to be part of the solution.

Our region is on the cusp of achieving a 21<sup>st</sup> century solution to a 20<sup>th</sup> century problem. By taking action, your office can remove one of the final impediments to a coordinated, strategic plan to invest billions of ratepayer dollars in fixing our sewer system in a way that is environmentally sustainable and provides the maximum community benefits.

Sincerely,

Joanne Kilgour, Chapter Director  
Sierra Club – Pennsylvania Chapter

