State Water Plan Update
Delaware Water Resources Regional Committee Meeting

July 12, 2022
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members in Attendance:

Kelly Anderson	Susan Myerov
Ed Boscola	Mark Nemitz
Mark Bowen	Chad Pindar
Becky Bradley	Jane Rowan
Kate Harper	Dean Ritter
Irvil Kear	Peter Rykard
Gary Kribbs	Elaine Paul Schaefer
James McCarthy	Eliza Walbridge
	Nathan Walker

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Carol Collier	Christopher Norris
Patrice Dume	Bill Royer
Andrew Frankenfield	Christopher Uhland

Others in Attendance:

Mike Hill – DEP	Monica Gould - Strategic Consulting Partners
Susan Weaver - DEP	Bob Whitmore - Strategic Consulting Partners

Visitors:
None

Welcome
Mike Hill, DEP, welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the meeting was being recorded, and provided helpful hints on the use of the technology. Mike informed the committee that Kristina Peacock-Jones has moved to a new position within the Abandoned Mines Division of DEP and is being replaced by Acting Director Susan Weaver. Chad Pindar, committee chair, welcomed all committee members to the meeting. Attendance was recorded through the online participants' log.

Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of the April 12, 2022, meeting was reviewed. Dean Ritter noted that his name was misspelled in the meeting summary. The April 12, 2022, meeting summary was approved with the correction on a Jim McCarthy / Kelly Anderson motion.

Public Comment

Chair Pindar opened the meeting for public comment. An opportunity to express comments verbally or in the chat box was offered. There was no public comment.

DEP Update

Susan Weaver presented the DEP update.

The three draft Critical Area Resource Plans (CARPs) are progressing well. The draft Back Creek CARP is complete and has been shared with the Ohio regional committee; it was approved by the committee to enter public comment and the 45-day agency review phase. This review time has come to a close and DEP staff and the Critical Area Advisory Committee are currently addressing the comments and suggested edits. A formal public hearing and committee meeting will take place on July 14. The draft Laurel Hill CARP will be shared later. The Marsh and Rock Creek CARP is still under review, but we anticipate it will be released shortly. Once the draft CARPs have been reviewed by their respective committee and approved by DEP with any additional edits, they will be sent to a list of stakeholders and planning officials within their watershed for review and comment. Additionally, DEP will host public hearings specifically to consider each CARP and solicit comments from the public prior to the vote for recommendation. Once the CARPs have been edited in accordance with public and planning agency feedback, the CARPs will return to their regional committees to vote on their recommendation to the statewide committee.

The final State Water Plan Update Report has been drafted and once the regional components have been added on July 14 will be submitted for internal review. It includes regional components, work group products, an assessment of progress since the last plan update, and a strategic plan going forward. We anticipate sharing this draft with the statewide committee at their August meeting before making the report available for public comment as required by Act 220.

The State Water Plan Atlas from 2009 is being developed into a StoryMap as a Digital Atlas. We plan to share this with you at the next round of regional committee meetings in October.

The eleventh statewide committee meeting was held on May 11. The twelfth meeting is scheduled for August 17.

Regional Water Resources Committee Materials

The previous regional priorities document was reviewed by the statewide committee and the statewide committee suggested minor changes to the priorities. The proposed revisions were reviewed by the Delaware committee in a tracked changes document to show where changes were made. The revised changes included new language with Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). It was suggested by committee members that all acronyms and abbreviations be spelled out, so all members of the public understand the document. Also, several typo errors were noted.

After a discussion of all points in the tracked changes document, a Mark Bowen / Jim McCarthy motion was approved to end the discussion and voted on the revised regional priorities. A Jim McCarthy / Becky Bradley motion was approved to accept the revised regional priorities for the Delaware region. A dissent vote was cast by Mark Bowen. A reason for the dissent was provided by Mark that the language in the document is too soft on the actions needed to be taken.

The approved Delaware regional priorities document is provided below.

2.2.1 Delaware Specific Regional Priorities

The Delaware region is the most populous region with over 5.5 million (43% of Pennsylvania's population) people calling it home and contains the only estuary in the state, which runs alongside Philadelphia. The large and growing population is going to require holistic coordination between all users to ensure the availability and quality of water as well as addressing stormwater and flooding. These varying and complex needs are partly addressed by entities like the Delaware River Basin Commission and the National Estuaries program but a unified approach to land use and water management is a critical piece of the puzzle.

Strengthen the Link Between Land Use and Water Resources Management

Linking land use decisions and water resources management to sustain and enhance the quality of life in the Delaware River basin is a top priority of the committee. The development and distribution of water resource information and data will help strengthen the link between land use, soil, and water resources management among multiple stakeholders. Implementation of comprehensive educational initiatives would improve how water resources management, soil and vegetation conservation, flood controls, stormwater management, and sewage management relate to land use decisions, infrastructure funding, construction decisions, and grant decisions. The goal of these efforts is to preserve, protect, restore, and enhance the quality, quantity, and availability of clean, sustainable water supplies for the people, businesses, and ecological needs of the commonwealth.

Regional Planning and Land Use Coordination and Collaboration

"Think regionally and act locally" is a priority for the committee. The committee's solutions to the region's water issues focus on developing regional coordination and planning to address stormwater management, climate change, water quality, water availability, water diversion, aquifers, healthy soils and vegetation, protecting fish and wildlife habitats, and protecting recreation areas. Solutions are developed through regional planning efforts, education and outreach with policy makers and the community, along with adequate funding. Water planning should be considered on a holistic watershed basis considering both droughts and floods. A One Water concept can further educate the community and increase collaboration among stakeholders for integrated water resources planning. Growth in rural, urban, and suburban areas continues to place stress on water infrastructure; replacement and retrofitting of existing infrastructure and development of new infrastructure can be a challenge in both urban and suburban communities. Larger scale coordination efforts between local, state, and federal entities can help ensure more of the region's needs are being accounted for during the planning phase and available resources can be maximized.

Region's Uniqueness

What are the Delaware region's unique characteristics that are important considerations in the state's water planning?

- This is the most populated region in the commonwealth and features a diverse population living in urban, suburban, and rural locations.
- The Delaware region has a large amount of impervious surfaces, leading to both water quality and quantity problems including reduced groundwater recharge and excess runoff which can pollute waterways and cause excess flooding.
- The region boasts abundant and varied natural and recreational resources.
- The main stem of the Delaware River remains undammed.
- The tidal Delaware region is the second largest in the country in terms of power production.[1]
- The Delaware basin discharges into the Atlantic Ocean via the Delaware Estuary, which is comprised of a unique ecosystem and a variety of stakeholders, including federal programs like the National Estuary Program, water suppliers, and industrial users. This also means that tidal influences are a consideration in planning efforts for the basin.
- The basin is challenged by the demands of four states and multiple jurisdictions. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court entered a Decree that established certain rights and obligations for New York City and New Jersey concerning diversions of water out of the Delaware River Basin. Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and New York City are all parties to the Decree.

[1] Projections of power generation sector water withdrawals in the Delaware River Basin, DRBC (https://www.nj.gov/drbc/library/documents/WMAC/031621/thompson_DRB_PGprojections.pdf)

- The Delaware River Basin Commission plays a significant role in the management of water resources in the basin.
- County planning commissions play a significant role in land use and should be part of the linkage between land use and water resources.
- Philadelphia's port complex is the largest freshwater ports in the world and is an economic hub of great value to the region.

Stormwater and Flood Management

What are the region's concerns and recommendations for stormwater and flood management to preserve water quality?

- Increased flooding can occur when floodplains are saturated by repeated storms, as well as during acute high intensity events.
- Stormwater management infrastructure often lacks proper maintenance, especially aging infrastructure.
- Strengthen local efforts, regional planning, and watershed-scale planning of water resources to support and enhance recommendations and requirements laid out in the latest Department of Environmental Protection's Stormwater Best Management Practices Manual including an emphasis on nature-based stormwater control measures.
- State authorities should ensure adequate funding for Act 167 plans.
- Regional authorities should ensure that Act 167 plans and resulting model ordinances do not propose to alleviate flooding on tributaries at the expense of main-stem flooding in accordance with the act's provisions.
- Legacy combined sewer overflows (CSO) remain a significant stormwater issue primarily in the tidal urban portions of the Delaware region.
- Stakeholders should continue to actively support source water projects that minimize impacts downstream. It's vital that the connection between potential sources for pollution upstream and resultant water quality downstream are understood by the public.
- Water should be considered from a holistic perspective as with the "One Water" movement.
- Storm surge may become an issue in the lower Delaware River as winds and long fetches draw higher waters upstream into the Delaware Estuary Coastal Zone.
- Schuylkill headwaters have coal mine refuse piles that need to be properly managed or removed to minimize the potential for coal tailings runoff into the system.
- Encourage projects that enhance stormwater management on previously developed land.

- Educate the public about stormwater impacts, including the difference between localized flooding versus regional flooding.

Climate Change Adaptation for Water Resources

How are water resources within the region being impacted by climate change and what could we do to adapt?

- Encourage regional authorities to assess the ability of aging infrastructure to handle high-intensity storm events, which are increasingly likely to occur in face of a changing climate, and implement infrastructure maintenance, as necessary, to mitigate flooding impacts.
- There is an increased risk that changing rainfall patterns and increasing temperature will likely lower the water table; as a result, we must continue to promote healthy soil and groundwater infiltration to maintain aquifers and manage reservoir systems to abate these potential effects on water quality and quantity. Healthy soils absorb more water and are critical to reducing runoff and mitigating the effects of drought.
- Encourage stakeholders to mitigate impacts of sea-level rise, including the impact on port facilities' economic benefit provided to the region, and protect drinking water sources and infrastructure from salt front intrusion in the Delaware Estuary.
- Encourage development of additional scenario models so municipalities can proactively plan for potential outcomes of climate change, which is resulting in significant amounts of riverine and localized flooding. Promote data showing changes in rain frequency and intensity and focus on climate resiliency. Recognize that the increased precipitation and storm frequency will have effects on land use planning.
- Stakeholders should make use of all potential bodies of research and resources such as the Delaware River Basin Commission Advisory Committee on Climate Change, which recently formed to develop ideas and tools.
- Climate change can have a number of water quality impacts including thermal impacts affecting dissolved oxygen and water use designations, an increase in both terrestrial and aquatic invasive species, increased erosion due to higher intensity storms resulting in higher turbidity, and changes in vegetation types affecting stream buffers.

Next Steps

Chair Pindar thanked all committee members for their attendance, participation, and ideas.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 on a Jim McCarthy / Jane Rowan motion.