

PENNSYLVANIA STATE WATER PLAN

Planning Today for Generations Yet to Come

- Public Participation -



Pennsylvania State Constitution, Article I, Section 27:

“The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania’s public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.”

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is currently implementing the Water Resources Planning Act (Act 220 of 2002), which calls for the State Water Plan to be updated by March 2008, and updated every 5 years thereafter. To carry out the planning provisions of the law, a Statewide Water Resources Committee was formed to help guide the development of the State Water Plan through a collaborative process. Representing Pennsylvania’s geographic diversity, six regional water resources committees were also created to facilitate the development of the regional components of the State Water Plan. Among their responsibilities, the statewide committee is to assist the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), in cooperation with the regional committees, to develop a public participation process to ensure that people throughout the Commonwealth with an interest in water resource issues have adequate opportunities to provide input into the creation of the new State Water Plan.

Major Provisions of Act 220

Act 220 requires the state water plan to contain several key components, including:

- Surface and groundwater inventories;
- **Assessments** and projections of existing and future withdrawal use demands, nonwithdrawal use needs, the current and future ability of public water supply agencies to provide water to their service areas, floodplain and stormwater management problems, navigation needs and transportation facilities, water resources required to serve areas with important or unique natural, scenic, environmental or recreational values of significance, and structural and nonstructural alternatives to address identified water availability problems;

Why Do We Need to Protect Our Water Resources?

Pennsylvania is blessed with abundant resources; however, in the 21st century sufficient water to meet our needs does not just “happen,” it must be protected from contamination and from over use. Our daily activities impact the quantity and quality of the water resources in our local watershed. To assure these water resources for future generations, we must manage them wisely.

Pennsylvanians rely heavily on our clean and abundant sources of water for vital everyday functions such as drinking, cooking and bathing, recreational activities like fishing, swimming, and boating, as well as agricultural, energy, industrial, and commercial uses, and use by the indigenous aquatic community. Clean water and healthy flows are vital to fish, wildlife, aquatic communities and plant life, and for sustaining critical habitats such as wetlands. In addition, Pennsylvania’s current and future economic growth depends on the availability of quality water resources. Due to these and other demands, we need to take time to assess the links between water quantity, water quality, aquatic habitat, and water use and conservation, and evaluate how they will affect the future of Pennsylvania’s economic growth and natural resources protection.

What Are the Benefits of Water Resources Planning in Pennsylvania?

Act 220 envisions a water resources planning process that involves all stakeholders engaged in an effort to answer basic questions such as how much water we have, how much water we use, and how much water we need. By planning for water resource needs using

- **Identification** of potential problems with water availability or conflicts among water uses and users, critical water planning areas where existing or future demands exceed or threaten to exceed the safe yield of available water resources, a process for identifying projects and practices that reduce the amount of water used or increase efficiency of use, practical alternatives for an adequate supply of water to satisfy existing and future reasonable and beneficial uses.
- A **review and evaluation** of statutes, regulations, policies, institutional arrangements, alternatives and recommended programs.

The six planning regions designated by Act 220 include:

- Delaware River Basin
- West Branch, Upper, Middle Susquehanna, and Chemung River Basins
- Juniata River, Lower Susquehanna River, Gunpowder, Northeast, and Elk Creek Basins
- Ohio River Basin
- Lake Erie and Genesee River Basins
- Potomac River Basin

sound scientific data on a watershed basis, decision makers at all levels of government and in the private sector, as well as citizens of the Commonwealth, will be able to assess the cumulative impact of our activities so that we can preserve and protect our water resources for current and future generations of Pennsylvanians. With proper planning, Pennsylvania's water resources are capable of serving multiple uses in a balanced manner. The Statewide Plan will empower the Commonwealth and its citizens to provide a high quality of life and economic prosperity through beneficial growth and economic development.

The updated State Water Plan will promote consistency between state, interstate, county, and local water resource plans. The updated Plan will also allow us to identify existing critical areas where water availability may be insufficient now or in the future.

How Can I Participate in the Process?

Public participation is a critical component of the State Water Plan and there are several opportunities to become involved with local water resource decisions that ultimately can impact your quality of life. Input at the local level is critical to identify the priorities of the public and determine how to best manage the water resources we use. Public meetings and hearings will be held across the state and public participation is encouraged. These meetings will take place in each of the six regional planning areas to better define local water resource problems and opportunities.

Water is one of Pennsylvania's most valuable resources and we need to do a better job of managing it wisely. Updating the State Water Plan is the first step in making sure that our vital water resources are available for future Pennsylvanians to enjoy.

Regional Water Resource Planning Areas



For regional committee meeting dates and locations or for more information on Act 220 and the State Water Plan Update, visit DEP's website at www.dep.state.pa.us, Keyword "DEP Water Resources."

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