



**State Water Plan Update
Upper Middle Susquehanna Water Resources Regional Committee
Meeting**

April 28, 2022
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members in Attendance:

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| Jared Dressler | Rhonda Manning |
| Andrew Gavin | Shannon Rossman |
| Todd Giddings | Robert Shannon |
| Dennis Hameister | Jennifer Whisner |
| Kurt Hausammann | Doug Weikel |
| Russell James | Cathy Yeakel |

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

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| Stephen Barondeau | Tony Maury |
| Patrick Burke | Jerry Walls |
| Andrew Gutshall | Wendy Walter |
| Beth Kern | Jim Weaver |

Others in Attendance:

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| Kristina Peacock-Jones – DEP | Monica Gould - Strategic Consulting Partners |
| James Horton – DEP | Bob Whitmore - Strategic Consulting Partners |
| Mike Hill – DEP | |

Visitors:

Corey Rilk

Welcome

James Horton, DEP, welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the meeting was being recorded, and provided helpful hints on the use of the technology. Shannon Rossman, committee chair, welcomed committee members to the meeting and completed a roll call for attendance.

Public Comment

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

Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of the January 27, 2022, meeting was approved on a Dennis Hameister / Andy Gavin motion.

DEP State Water Plan Update

Kristina Peacock-Jones provided an update of what DEP is working on regarding the State Water Plan Update.

The USGS Water Use Data and Research (WUDR) grant data sharing project involving data sharing between agencies (SRBC, DRBC, and USGS) is operational.

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; the draft Laurel Hill CARP will be shared later. The draft Marsh and Rock Creek Watersheds CARP is still under review and will be shared with the committee upon review. The CARPs will be sent to a list of stakeholders and planning officials within their watershed for review and comment after the regional committee review. Additionally, DEP will host a public hearing specifically to consider the CARP and solicit comments from the public prior to the vote for recommendation. Contingent on not having any edits because of the comment period and public testimony, the CARPs will then return to their regional committees to vote on recommendation to the statewide committee.

The final State Water Plan Update report is currently in the process of being drafted by DEP it will include 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 May 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.

A public hearing to solicit comments from interested persons on the regional components was held on March 11, 2022. A transcript of the hearing has been prepared and was sent to committee members for review. Only one comment was given at the hearings from the Ohio region. No other public comments were received.

The tenth statewide committee meeting was held on March 16, 2021. The eleventh meeting is scheduled for May 11, 2022.

Region Priorities

Committee members have received a copy of the revised region priorities and region components to be included in the State Water Plan. The region priorities and region components were approved as presented and recommended to be passed on to the statewide committee on a Kurt Hausammann / Doug Weikel motion. The finalized region priorities and region components follow.

Specific Regional Priorities

The Upper/Middle Susquehanna operates as a headwater's region for the Susquehanna basin and contains the West Branch watershed. The region's challenges include a history of legacy mining, aging infrastructure, and a relatively low population making broad regional coordination and ecosystem protection critical.

Protect Important Headwater Habitats, Enhance Recharge Areas, and Minimize Stormwater Runoff of the Upper/Middle Susquehanna Basin

To care for the water resources in the Upper/Middle Susquehanna basin and ensure a sustainable supply of quality water, important headwater habitats and groundwater recharge areas must be protected. Because much of the basin is forested, the approach should focus on forested land use practices and their effect on area water supplies. Minimizing large scale forest cutting is a priority to mitigate downstream flooding, preserve forested ecosystem services, and reduce sedimentation. Addressing legacy infrastructure, including point source outfalls, in acid mine drainage areas is also critical to protecting important headwaters and streams. We strongly encourage reuse of degraded/abandoned land such as available industrial or commercial lands. Marcellus shale is a large resource for natural gas in the basin that can require large quantities of water for hydraulic fracturing and has potential impacts to the headwaters, wetlands, and the overall groundwater and surface water quality and quantity of the region. Committee members recognize a different approach must be taken to address water quantity and quality issues between rural and urban/suburban areas within the region. Rural areas strive to protect forest lands, preserve recreation areas and greenways, and protect critical habitat areas. Stormwater quality and quantity concerns in suburban and urban areas may be addressed with green infrastructure through zoning ordinance changes for underutilized and/or vacant commercial property, as well as their associated parking and paved areas.

Working collaboratively with stakeholders including state, county, and municipal government, municipal authorities, conservation districts, and watershed associations through education and outreach efforts is essential to advancing sound land use practices that are protective of these headwater areas. As part of a strategy to accomplish this, local governments can promote appropriate municipal ordinances in public water supply recharge areas, which is particularly important in areas with limited availability of quality water. The committee also recommends that statewide water well construction standards be implemented, particularly related to residential well drilling and geothermal bore holes, which will protect and sustain groundwater quality and availability.

Multi-Municipal Planning and Coordination

Land use planning and development are critical to protect headwater habitats, enhance recharge areas, and minimize stormwater runoff. Planning needs to expand with county-wide action plans and integrated water resources management throughout a watershed. A regional approach of education and outreach to water resource stakeholders,

emphasizing the value of coordinated water quality and quantity planning among municipalities, is critical to protecting all communities. Continue to prioritize upgrading existing aging water and sewer infrastructure to maintain water quality and quantity, recognizing that parts of the region have experienced a decline in population and as a result many communities are challenged economically. Multi-municipal planning coordination enhances success in preserving water quality and quantity and optimizes the use of funding dollars.

Region's Uniqueness

What are the Upper/Middle Susquehanna region's unique characteristics that are important considerations in the state's water planning?

- This region encompasses a large portion of the headwaters for the Susquehanna River.
- The Upper/Middle Susquehanna has complex geology and substantial topographical variation.
- Legacy mining in the region presents water quality problems such as source water contamination but also provides opportunities through mineral recapture and recycling.
- There is a vast number of diverse hydrologic features in the basin including wetlands, streams, lakes, and ponds as well as peatlands.
- The Upper/Middle Susquehanna basin is densely forested, which helps to filter groundwater.
- With a large number of state forests, state game lands, and public lands, recreation plays a big role in this region's economy.
- Marcellus shale is a large resource for natural gas in the basin.

Stormwater and Flood Management

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

- Good forestry practices should be continued in order to support headwaters, as healthy forests help mitigate flooding downstream.
- Incorporate green measures, such as [green streets](#) and [green roofs](#) into municipal plans to better capture precipitation in urbanized areas.
- Retrofitting existing stormwater facilities, promoting groundwater infiltration and recharge areas with a focus on smaller-scale granular solutions instead of large basins would be beneficial. With consideration of climate projections and future changes in the regional climate, local authorities should assess aging infrastructure for high-frequency storm events, erosion control, and filtration.
- Vacant shopping malls and corporate properties designed parking lots for maximum occupancy, which can lead to excessive runoff. Since the advent of virtual workspaces and online shopping, there is less demand for such large parking lots. Methods to

modify or reuse these parking lots by retrofitting them with new stormwater best management practices (BMPs) should be investigated first by accurately determining responsibility. Transferring development rights might be a tool to achieve stormwater improvements on these properties.

- Stakeholders should provide education and outreach to homeowners on the impacts of stormwater, including the differences between pervious and impervious surfaces and various mitigation techniques, such as rain gutters and rain barrels, etc.
- Stormwater BMPs should be properly maintained; pervious pavements vacuumed regularly, streets swept, and algae controlled. Maintenance provisions in Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) requirements and credits can help ensure continued functionality of BMPs.
- Connecting multiple municipalities within counties to create MS4 or stormwater consortiums so communities can discuss how best to apply the regulations would be beneficial.
- Stormwater ordinances need to be kept up to date with stormwater infrastructure improvements considered alongside redevelopment projects.

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?

- Increased storm frequency and high intensity events will create issues with groundwater recharge and flash flooding. With droughts having a more severe impact on groundwater, continue to promote groundwater recharge to increase water availability.
- An in-depth study of climate change implications on water supply, vulnerability, availability, and reliability would be beneficial.
- Stakeholders should promote flexibility and incremental practical steps in response to the changing climate, especially in smaller communities that may lack the necessary budgets.
- Stakeholders should provide education and outreach focusing on resiliency and scientific data to help guide climate change discussions.
- Emphasizing the benefits and co-benefits of climate adaptation projects to the public and stakeholders would be beneficial, such as general resiliency and health of the ecosystem.

Next Steps

Chair Rossman thanked all committee members for their attendance, participation, and ideas and completing the important task for the committee.

James Horton, DEP staff, provided an overview of the committee's future work.

- The approved regional committee documents will be provided to the statewide committee for review at the May 11 meeting.

- The statewide committee is hoping to approve the updated State Water Plan by September and pass the Plan with a recommendation to approve to the Secretary of DEP by September.
- The Secretary of DEP has 90 days to review and approve the Plan.
- DEP is planning to keep regional committees engaged after the Plan is approved as a discussion forum for ideas and discussion of actions initiated or completed.
- Upper / Middle regional committee meetings are scheduled for the following dates in 2022
 - A July meeting is not scheduled at this time; may be listed as a workshop meeting and can be held if there are actions to be completed.
 - October 27

The meeting was adjourned at 9:41 on an Andy Gavin / Dennis Hameister motion.