

On August 17, 2015, Potter County's Triple Divide Watershed Coalition, the Central Pennsylvania Coalition for Source Water Protection, the Columbia-Montour Coalition for Source Water Protection, the North Central Source Water Protection Alliance, the Tioga County Source Water Protection Coalition joined representatives from the State College Borough Water Authority and the Centre County Planning Commission for a very productive meeting with Pa. Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary John Quigley and two of his Deputy Secretaries in Harrisburg. Goal of the meeting was to draw the Secretary's attention to some gaps in DEP's permit process and notification system when it comes to gas drilling and other activities within public water source recharge areas.

Dr. Jennifer Whisner, from the Columbia -Montour Coalition began the discussion with a brief PowerPoint presentation overview of the sourcewater protection program. Representatives stressed the importance of preserving and protecting Pennsylvania's public drinking water sources. Specific emphasis was placed on inclusion of delineated recharge areas into existing databases used as references during technical reviews by DEP staff thus making water system operators aware of pending activities that could affect water quality. Likewise, gas drillers and others who are conducting activities need to know where these sourcewater protection zones are located, they pointed out.

The group also asked the Secretary to provide assistance to improve coordination between DEP's Emergency Response program and water systems in the event of a release incident siting the current arrangements in place through the Tioga County EMA office. The group also expressed their concerns regarding the Department's recent decision to discontinue funding for the Water Resources Education Network (WREN). Some representatives explained their difficulties while attempting to comply with new permitting initiatives being implemented by the SRBC. The Secretary asked the regional DEP representatives for specific suggestions on what changes could be instituted in order to implement the changes under discussion. Marcus Kohl, Director of the DEP regional office in Williamsport, and Mark Stephens, DEP hydro-geologist responded with detailed descriptions of how these were accomplished in the Williamsport region as well as suggesting changes needed to implement on a State-wide basis.

At the conclusion of the discussions, Secretary Quigley pledged his support for changes in DEP procedures and/or state laws that would address the groups' concerns. Secretary Quigley was joined by Dana Aunkst, Deputy Secretary for Field Operations; and Kelly Heffner, Deputy Secretary for Water Management.