

Source Water Protection and Public Water Supply Coalitions



(The five chairs of Public Water Supply Coalitions in Pennsylvania share their recent activities at the PA DEP North-central Regional Office in Williamsport, PA. From L to R; Jennifer Whisner, Columbia Montour Source Water Protection Coalition Chairman; Carl Cox, Tioga County Source Water Protection Coalition Chairman, Mike Savage, Central PA Source Water Alliance for Protection Chairman, Eric Moore, North Central Source Water Protection Alliance Chairman, and John McLaughlin, Triple Divide Watershed Coalition Chairman)

On January 9, 2014, newly formed public water supply coalitions had an opportunity to meet with the Regional Director of the North-central PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Regional Office, Marcus Kohl, in Williamsport, PA. Penn State Extension Water Resources Educator, Jim Clark, was able to participate in this meeting. The main discussion centered on the recharge delineation zones that are identified when a public water supply completes a source water protection plan. These zones identify the watershed for public water supply sources and this area needs to be protected to protect the water supply. The coalitions were asking for notifications when a permit is granted by DEP in these recharge zones. Director Kohl thanked the coalition members for their important work and was willing to discuss several possible solutions to improving the permit communication process.

In Tioga and Potter County, public water supply coalitions have worked with Emergency Management Agencies (EMA) and the PA DEP to implement a spill response system. If a spill occurs, in a public water supply recharge zone, in those counties, EMA notifies the PA DEP and the PA DEP then notifies the public water supply operator. The operator can then do what he or she can do to protect the water supply and the public.

This is the first combined meeting of the newly forming public water supply coalitions in the state. Future annual meetings and enhanced communications are being planned by the groups.