



January 20, 2017

Acting Secretary McDonnell,

Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with source water protection coalition (SWPC) members from the Northcentral Region. We were sorry to hear on the day of our meeting that you were ill. We hope that you enjoyed a full and speedy recovery! We were also, however, most appreciative of the time that Executive Deputy Secretary for Programs John Stefanko and Deputy Secretary - Office of Water Programs Dana Aunkst spent with us. We felt that our concerns and possible solutions were heard, and that the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) is committed to supporting our goals of protecting the quality and quantity of the Commonwealth's drinking water resources and providing sustainable access to water for our growing communities.

We have summarized our understanding of this productive discussion below.

**Summary:**

The SWPC in the North-Central Region represent a wide variety of stakeholders with a wide variety of concerns, but we are united by a common goal of proactively and preventatively working to protect and preserve the Commonwealth's drinking water resources for future generations.

We work toward this goal in part through education. We reach out to our local schools, to our municipal officials, and to our communities to educate them about practices that protect and preserve water quality, and to encourage them to be good stewards of our water resources.

We also work toward this goal through advocacy. We advocate for acquisition of meaningful data, such as baseline groundwater studies and source water protection plans. In addition, we advocate for putting good data in the hands of folks who can use it to make wise decisions that protect water resources.

We believe that the PADEP can promote our success in education and advocacy by addressing the following concerns:

**1) SWPCs need a central resource for administrative and logistical assistance to help us build on each other's successes.**

While we very much appreciate the PADEP's restoration of funding for environmental education, we miss the administrative and logistical support formerly provided by the Water Resources Education Network (WREN) through the PA League of Women Voters. Before its

demise in 2014, WREN played a vital role in getting Pennsylvania's SWPCs off the ground and in maximizing our successes by providing a central clearinghouse for information on workshops, funding opportunities, water quality policy news, and archives of successful outreach and education programs. Re-instating WREN would save SWPCs across Pennsylvania tremendous amounts of work re-inventing the wheel, and/or trying to find money to pay for it!

***It is our understanding that PADEP commits to investigating the feasibility of both re-establishing a relationship between PADEP and WREN, and re-instating Julie Kollar in the essential position of WREN director.***

**2) PADEP-funded Source Water Protection Plans and hydrogeologically-defined Source Water Protection Zones are not being used effectively to protect water resources.**

More than 100 water suppliers in the Northcentral region have Source Water Protection Plans that delineate surface water and groundwater areas contributing to their drinking water sources, catalog existing and potential sources of contamination, and assess the susceptibility of each source to contamination. This important information, which cost several million dollars to acquire, for the most part sits on shelves. Permitting and planning bodies do not know where the source water protection zones (SWPZ) are, and water suppliers have no official channel through which to find out about activities in SWPZs that may potentially impact their water sources. The Northcentral SWPCs understand that safety concerns may limit publicizing of SWPZ locations, and instead urges PADEP to incorporate these zones (already in a GIS-compatible format) into the Department's internal permitting software. We do not ask that PADEP use this information to deny all permits in SWPZs, but rather to flag permits in these zones for extra consideration, and to develop and recommend BMPs be used as appropriate in sensitive areas.

***It is our understanding that PADEP commits to working to incorporate source water protection zones as defined in PADEP-funded Source Water Protection Plans into the PADEP's internal permitting software, and to developing guidelines for permit approval, including suggesting appropriate engineering controls for different land uses in sensitive areas.***

**3) Municipal growth and economic development are being limited by fundamental mismatches between the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and PADEP permitting requirements for water suppliers.**

PADEP requires that public water suppliers have pumping capacity in excess of their normal capacity in case of high demand, unexpected mechanical failure, or contamination. The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) is not allowing water suppliers to have the back-up pumping capacity required by PADEP. This puts public water suppliers in the impossible position of necessarily violating requirements of one agency or the other. Instead of permitting excess capacity, SRBC suggests that emergency permits would be available as necessary on a case-by-case basis. The emergency permitting and frequent re-permitting required is unduly burdensome, especially for smaller suppliers that have minimal administrative support and limited ability to raise the necessary capital.

In addition, permitting requirements for SRBC are more involved than those of PADEP, less predictable than those of PADEP, more expensive than those of PADEP, and more time-consuming, often requiring 18-24 months and sometimes as many as 36 months to complete. Long response times have resulted in potential new commercial customers choosing business sites outside the region. In addition to the review times being lengthy, they frequently involve several resubmissions of data to satisfy SRBC's technical concerns. These long review times may delay the public water supplier's ability to safely and efficiently serve their customers. Many public water suppliers see a contradiction in the review process when they compare the volume of SRBC withdrawal permits processed annually for consumptive use (i.e. Shale drilling) to non-consumptive use (i.e. public water supply). It is important to note that the consumptive use permits generate considerable revenue compared to non-consumptive uses. In addition, the timing of reporting requirements for SRBC and PADEP do not align, causing water suppliers to potentially pay for excessive testing. A simple example is source meter calibration, required every two years by DEP and every 5 years by SRBC.

We are concerned that, in its mission to protect water resources in the Susquehanna Basin, the SRBC is making it difficult for water suppliers to fulfill their obligations to their municipalities. The Northcentral SWPCs hope that PADEP and SRBC can work together to streamline and expedite permitting.

*It is our understanding that our concerns will be brought to the attention of the PADEP representative to the SRBC, who will in turn bring them to the attention of the SRBC. It is also our understanding that PADEP will undertake to work with SRBC to better align requirements for permit/re-permit timing, cost, and requirements, as well as excess pumping capacity requirements.*

**4) PA desperately needs baseline information on groundwater resources to be able to define the existence/extent of future impacts to water quality, identify additional potential water sources, and assess possible impacts of water quality on human health.**

Groundwater resource reports for most Pennsylvania counties are decades old and need updating to keep up with economic development, community growth, and new information connecting water quality to human health. Seven counties in PA have completed or are in the process of completing baseline groundwater quality studies funded through Act 13. These studies are expensive (\$350,000-\$400,000) and cannot be funded by counties alone, even with generous contributions (~25%) from their partner – USGS. In past years, monies set aside by the State for baseline groundwater surveys have been repurposed, and the Northcentral SPWCs urge PADEP to stand firm in the face of other demands on these funds so we can continue to build this database of important data.

*It is our understanding that PADEP commits to affirming the vital interest of the Commonwealth in conducting baseline groundwater studies and defending the funding set aside for them.*

## **Columbia-Montour Coalition for Source Water Protection**

*Working Together to Protect our Water Supplies*

Again, many thanks to Executive Deputy Secretary Stefanko and Deputy Secretary Aunkst for their time and attention. We hope we will be able to meet with you in person and hear about the progress PADEP has made toward these goals.

Sincerely,

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