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Water Utility Council of the
PA-Section, American Water
Works Association (PA-AWWA)



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

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*PA- Section, American Water Works Association
National Association of Water Companies
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Modernizing Our Country's Drinking Water Monitoring Data

By Joel Beauvais

We live in a society that allows us to get information through our phones, TVs, and computers from across the world in a matter of seconds. Although we've come a long way in the information age, some of our country's most important public health information is still collected and shared using antiquated methods like manual data entry and even paper reporting.

That's why I'm excited to announce of the launch of EPA's new [Compliance Monitoring Data Portal](#) (CMDP), which allows water laboratories and public drinking water systems to electronically share drinking water data with their states and tribal agencies. The portal will allow us to replace the paper-based system, leading to more timely and higher-quality monitoring data.

By reducing the hours previously spent manually entering data, identifying data-entry errors, and issuing data resubmittal requests, states and tribes will now be able to free up more time to

focus on preventing and responding to public health issues in their communities. Once fully implemented by all states nationwide, we expect the new portal could reduce state data entry and data management work hundreds of thousands of hours per year.

CMDP's launch marks the completion of the first phase of our agency's multi-year [Safe Drinking Water Information System](#) (SDWIS) modernization project. We are also making improvements in the development of a system called SDWIS Prime. Prime will improve state decision making by using the sample data received from CMDP to develop new reports and provide automated notifications. Prime is currently scheduled to be released in 2018.

Together, CMDP and Prime will help increase the timeliness and accuracy of drinking water data transferred between drinking water systems, primacy agencies, and EPA. Systems like these can help move our country closer to a future where all Americans will have faster and better access to information about the quality of the water that is piped into their homes.

Note: The views expressed here are intended to explain EPA policy. They do not change anyone's rights or obligations.

Source: EPA Blog Digest, 10/11/2016

Water Resources Advisory Committee Meeting Cancellation

The October 26 meeting of the Water Resources Advisory Committee has been **cancelled**.

Questions on the cancellation or the committee should be addressed to Lee McDonnell at 717-787-5017 or lmcdonnell@pa.gov. Agenda and materials for future meetings will be available on the department web site at www.dep.pa.gov.

Source: Pennsylvania Bulletin, [10/15/2016](#)

Reorganization of the DEP

The Executive Board approved a reorganization of the Department of Environmental Protection effective September 29, 2016. An updated organizational chart is available in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

Source: Pennsylvania Bulletin, [10/15/2016](#)

SRBC: Public Hearing

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission will hold a public hearing on November 3, 2016, at 2 p.m. at the Pennsylvania State Capitol, East Wing, Harrisburg to hear testimony on projects. A full list of projects scheduled for action is available in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

Information on the applications for these projects is available at www.srbc.net/wrp. Additional supporting documents can be found [here](#). The deadline for the submission of written comments is November 14, 2016. For further information contact Jason Oyler, General Counsel, 717-238-0423, Ext. 1312, fax 717-238-2436.

Source: Pennsylvania Bulletin, [10/15/2016](#)

GO-TIME: Centralized Grant System to Streamline, Consolidate Application Process

Applicants for the 2017 round of Environmental Education Grants that opened today will be the first to use a centralized eGrants system developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and deployed by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The new process is one of DEP's initiatives developed through the Governor's Office of Transformation, Innovation, Management and Efficiency (GO-TIME).

"Centralizing the awarding of grant money and eliminating the outdated paper-driven application process will speed up the awarding of grants and improve service to the public, local governments, universities and the business community who apply for them," DEP Acting Secretary Patrick McDonnell said. "This is the first of DEP's grant programs to be rolled out using this electronic centralized system that is expected to reduce costs and speed up the process of reviewing and awarding."

The new eGrants system will replace the old paper-driven grant application process allowing applications to be submitted and tracked electronically. DEP's review of applications and attachments, scoring and processing of grant contracts will also be electronic, cutting the amount of time it takes to award and process grants as well the amounts of paper/postage used.

Read [more](#).

Source: DEP News, 10/13/2016

Environmental Issues in Play during Waning Days of Senate, House Session

The final six scheduled voting days before the election, and the end of this legislative session, will start October 17, so whatever the House and Senate want to get done will have to happen in the next two weeks. After that, all bills die and have to start over in January.

There is potential action on several environmental issues, including: endangered species, Marcellus Shale drilling regulations, on the state's approach to environmental laws generally, the state's Uniform Construction Code, automatic DEP erosion control permits, making it easier to destroy unused and unwanted drugs, opening State Parks to commercial development, deer management policy and natural gas pipeline safety.

Of course, *there's always the chance for big surprises, just like happened during the last few budget seasons*. For example, language from a stand-alone bill can easily be added to another "Christmas tree" bill with a hodgepodge of other provisions.

Here's a partial list of some issues that may be in play:

House - Endangered Species:

Rep. Jeff Pyle (R-Armstrong) has filed amendments to [Senate Bill 1166](#) (Stefano-R-Fayette) and [Senate Bill 1168](#) (Eichelberger-R-Blair) now on the House Calendar to add unrelated language to reduce protection for endangered species during environmental permit reviews.

The language now in Senate Bill 1166 and Senate Bill 1168 would allow the Game and Fish and Boat Commission to set their own license fees. The amendments: Senate Bill 1166 -- [A10257](#) and [A10259](#) and to Senate Bill 1168 -- [A10260](#) and [A10258](#) -- are similar to legislation Rep. Pyle introduced three years ago as [House Bill 1576](#). The bill has not been reintroduced since.

Pennsylvania's environmental programs have protected endangered species since 1974. Click [here](#) for background on the legislation.

House - Marcellus Drilling Regs:

The House is expected to take up an amendment to be offered by Rep. Jaret Gibbons (D-Beaver) to [House Bill 1391](#) (Everett-R-Lycoming) to rollback well site restoration, waste disposal reporting and freshwater construction standards now in DEP's final [Chapter 78a Marcellus Shale drilling regulations](#). Amendment [A09804](#) is a 7-page amendment that would gut House Bill 1391, which deals with the unrelated oil and gas well landowner royalty issue, and slip in regulatory language repealing several Chapter 78a provisions (page 5 & 6 of the amendment). Rep. Gibbons is the Democratic Chair of the House Oil and Gas Caucus. Click [here](#) for more background.

The Senate also passed [Senate Bill 1229](#) (Vogel-R-Beaver) in July that would roll back the same provisions in DEP's regulations. The bill is now in the House Rules Committee on a concurrence vote.

In a related action Thursday, the Marcellus Shale Coalition filed a lawsuit in Commonwealth Court to block implementation of DEP's Chapter 78a regulations for issues similar to those raised in the amendments.

House - Automatic OK Of DEP Erosion Control Permits:

Another amendment posted for consideration to [House Bill 1391](#) (Everett-R-Lycoming) by Rep. Jason Ortity (R-Allegheny) -- (Amendment [A09798](#)) -- would require automatic approval of DEP erosion and sedimentation control permits if the applications were submitted by a licensed engineer, regardless if they actually meet Chapter 102 requirements.

House - Opening State Parks to Commercial Development:

In July the House defeated attempts to open State Parks to commercial development by a vote of 123 to 77. However, [House Bill 2013](#) (Ellis-R-Butler) could be brought up again at any time for a final House vote.

House - Return to Unscientific Deer Management Program:

[House Bill 2083](#) (Maloney-R- Berks), which would return the Game Commission to an unscientific approach to deer management by creating a new Independent Forest and Wildlife Advisory Council to manage deer by the maximum sustained yield method ([sponsor summary](#)), was reported out of the House State Government (not Game and Fisheries Committee) on September 26 and Tabled. It could be brought up for a vote at any time.

Senate - No More Stringent Than Federal Law:

[Senate Resolution 385](#) (Brooks-R- Crawford) directing the Joint State Government Commission to identify environmental laws and regulations more stringent than federal law. The Resolution is now on the Senate Calendar for action. It only takes one vote in the Senate to make this happen. No House action is required.

Senate - Uniform Construction Code:

[House Bill 568](#) (Evankovich-R-Allegheny) which would change the way the state's Uniform Construction Code is updated, including energy conservation measures, is now in the Senate Rules Committee, back from the House on a concurrence vote.

The PA Environmental Council, Delaware Valley Green Building Council and the Pittsburgh Green Building Alliance have expressed concerns about the bill saying its provisions significantly delays the updating process and the benefits of more efficient new construction.

Senate - Nomination of Patrick McDonnell as DEP Secretary:

On September 21, Gov. Wolf nominated Acting DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell to be the permanent Secretary for the Department of Environmental Protection. McDonnell has filled that post since the May 20 resignation of John Quigley. The nomination requires an up or down vote by the Senate.

Making It Easier To Destroy Unwanted Drugs:

With Senate and House leaders and Gov. Wolf focused on addressing issues related to the opioid crisis in Pennsylvania, taking steps to prevent prescription drug abuse, like promoting collection events for unused prescription and over-the-counter drugs, is part of the solution.

Gov. Wolf noted in his address to a Joint Session of the Senate and House on September 28 there are 520 take-back boxes located at police stations across Pennsylvania, and these efforts have collected and destroyed over 145,000 pounds of prescription drugs, including opioids.

The language in [House Bill 1737](#) (Maher-R-Allegheny) would make it much easier to permanently dispose of unused and unwanted prescription drugs. Click [here](#) for more background.

The bill is supported by a variety of groups, including DEP's Environmental Justice Advisory Board which highlighted the importance of providing safe disposal of unwanted or unneeded prescription and other drugs.

Covanta Energy, which supplies safe and secure disposal of prescription drugs through its [Rx4 Safety Program](#), also supports the legislation. Covanta operates five energy-from-waste facilities in Pennsylvania, including in Dauphin, Delaware, Lancaster, Montgomery and York counties. The Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee is scheduled to take up the bill at a meeting on October 17.

As it happens, [October 22 is DEA's National Drug Take-Back Day](#). Click [here](#) to learn more about collection events in Pennsylvania.

End Exemption from PA One Call for Natural Gas Gathering Lines:

The Senate passed [Senate Bill 1235](#) (Baker-R-Luzerne) that would end the exemption from PA One Call, the call before you dig program, for natural gas gathering lines ([Senate Fiscal Note](#) and summary) on September 27. The bill is in the House Consumer Affairs Committee.

The Public Utility Commission is supporting the bill, but the conventional oil and gas drillers represented by the PA Independent Oil and Gas Association (the same group that killed DEP's conventional drilling regulations) opposes the bill.

The entire PA One Call law is due to sunset on December 31, 2016 without final action by the House and Senate.

Rep. Bob Godshall (R-Montgomery), Majority Chair of the House Consumer Affairs Committee, has his own bill -- [House Bill 2308](#) -- that would simply extend the program for one year.

Six more days, what will the Senate and House do on environmental issues? Stay tuned, we'll find out soon.

Source: PA Environmental Digest, 10/17/2016

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