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# WUC

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



## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

### From Gmerek Government Relations, Inc.

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*PA- Section, American Water Works Association  
National Association of Water Companies  
Water Works Operators' Association of Pennsylvania*

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## PUC Launches Mobile-Friendly PAMPowerSwitch Site

On April 15, 2014, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) announced the launch of a mobile-friendly version of [www.PAMPowerSwitch.com](http://www.PAMPowerSwitch.com), the agency's website with information on shopping for electric suppliers, consumer alerts and information, educational videos and more.

"The variable rate issue this winter has brought higher traffic to PAMPowerSwitch - both overall and with mobile users - and this is one more thing we're doing to make it easier for consumers to navigate the competitive market," said PUC Chairman Robert F. Powelson. "We want to help as many consumers as possible." The new mobile version makes it easier for consumers to navigate the website and even switch their electric suppliers from their smartphone or tablet, rather than a desktop or laptop computer.

Through monitoring PAMPowerSwitch traffic data, the PUC saw a high number of mobile visitors landing on a page and then leaving, without clicking through to other pages. Mobile visitors are

immediately exiting the website at a significantly higher rate than desktop users.

Year-over-year traffic data shows that mobile usage of PAMPowerSwitch increased 100 percent from March 2013 to March 2014. On a broader level, the number of total internet users in North America accessing the Web from a mobile device is estimated to rise from 57.9 percent in 2013 to 64.3 percent this year - according to a [report](#) by eMarketer - and to 79.2 percent by 2017.

In addition to releasing a mobile-friendly website, the PUC has made numerous additions and updates to the site's content since January in order to educate consumers on hot-button issues regarding electricity. Topics that were added or revamped include variable and fixed rate contracts, consumer choices and rights, questions to ask suppliers when shopping, what to do at the end of a contract and more.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission balances the needs of consumers and utilities; ensures safe and reliable utility service at reasonable rates; protects the public interest; educates consumers to make independent and informed utility choices; furthers economic development; and fosters new technologies and

competitive markets in an environmentally sound manner.

For recent news releases and video of select Commission proceedings or more information about the PUC, visit our website at [www.puc.pa.gov](http://www.puc.pa.gov). Follow the PUC on Twitter - @PA\_PUC for all things utility. "Like" PAPowerSwitch on Facebook for easy access to information on electric shopping.

**Source:** PUC Press Release, 4/15/2014

## **DEP Releases 2014 Susquehanna River Sampling Plan**

**O**n April 16, 2014, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) released a work plan outlining efforts to continue studying and sampling the Susquehanna River basin throughout 2014. The plan includes analysis of water quality, water flow, sediment, pesticides, hormones, invertebrates, fish tissue and more.

"Over the last two years where we tremendously enhanced our examination efforts, DEP has learned a great deal about the health of the Susquehanna River," DEP Secretary E. Christopher Abruzzo said. "It is important to continue these efforts so that DEP can create policy and regulation based on facts and sound science."

In 2013, DEP staff spent 927 days collecting samples on the river. The amount of work days in 2014 is expected to be the same or increase slightly.

DEP will collect samples at sites along the Susquehanna in Marietta, City Island and Sunbury and along the Juniata River at the Lewistown Narrows and Newport. Additional sampling sites along the Delaware, Allegheny and Youghiogheny rivers will be used as control sites to establish a baseline for water quality. Portions of the study will focus on areas where smallmouth bass reproduce.

Staff will test for various water quality parameters, like dissolved oxygen, temperature and pH, at multiple sites in the Susquehanna River.

Samples of fish, mussels and macroinvertebrates, such as mayflies, will also be collected. Fish tissue from bass collected during the spawning season will be analyzed for pesticides, PCBs and metals.

Throughout 2014, DEP will continue to sample for pesticides at existing water quality network stations along the Susquehanna, Juniata and Delaware rivers. Samples will be collected during high and low flows to better document pesticides in these waters.

DEP's biologists continue to consult with a contracted algal expert to analyze samples collected in the Susquehanna River Basin and control sites. Algal samples are analyzed for total suspended solids, ammonia, nitrogen and phosphorus to determine the relationship between nutrient run-off, or discharges, and algal growth. Excessive algae may be indicative of poor water quality.

For more information, visit [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us) and click on the "Susquehanna River Study Update" button on the homepage.

**Source:** DEP Press Releases, 4/16/2014

## **Deadline for Municipalities to Apply for Small Water and Sewer Grants is May 16**

**I**ncourage all of our local municipalities and municipal authorities that are looking for funding to upgrade and repair their sewer and water infrastructure to take advantage of the Department of Community and Economic Development [PA Small Water and Sewer grant program](#).

There is \$3 million in state grants currently available through the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) to assist municipalities and municipal authorities with the construction, improvement, expansion, or rehabilitation or repair of a water supply or sanitary sewer system. Projects eligible for funding are those which have a total project cost of not less than \$50,000 and not more than \$150,000.

The application deadline for this important program is May 16 and projects will be considered at the July 8 meeting of the CFA.

For more information on the PA Small Water and Sewer grant program or to apply for funding, click [here](#).

Source: Senator Yudichak Reports, April 2014

## **DEP Celebrates Earth Day with Cleanups, Exhibits and Awards**

**D**EP staff from around the state are taking part in lots activities to commemorate Earth Day. Portions of the DEP at Home exhibit was on display at today's "Red Goes Green" day event sponsored by the Phillies at Citizen's Bank Park. The display then moves on to the East Wing Rotunda of the State Capitol Building from April 21 to 25.

On April 22, staff from DEP's South- central Regional Office will clean up Asylum Run, a tributary that runs through the State Hospital grounds in Harrisburg. Also on Earth Day, DEP will announce the award of more than \$309,000 in Environmental Education Grants for 111 projects around the state. And later that evening, winners of the Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence will be honored at a dinner sponsored by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council at the Harrisburg Hilton. DEP Secretary E. Christopher Abruzzo will be the keynote speaker.

On April 27, DEP staff will clean up the east shore of the Susquehanna River in Harrisburg between Market and Forster streets.

DEP's regional offices are also participating in cleanup events. Volunteers from DEP's Southeast Region will participate in the Brandywine Valley Association's canoe-based cleanup of the Brandywine Creek in Chester County on April 26.

Many other cleanup events will be taking place across the state throughout the end of May as part of the Great American Cleanup of PA. You can find a

cleanup event in your area by visiting [www.gacofpa.org](http://www.gacofpa.org).

Source: DEP News, 4/17/2014

## **Anglers Have Successful Opening Day of Trout Season in Formerly AMD Plagued Watershed**

**F**or the second year in a row, anglers were able to fish for trout along the tributaries of Bennett Branch Sinnemahoning Creek in Clearfield County. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission stocked the waterway for the first time this year after a private group stocked it last year.

The stocking was made possible due to the water quality improvements made as a result of the \$14 million Hollywood Acid Mine Drainage Treatment Plant that treats 21 separate discharges in the West Branch Susquehanna Watershed.

Operation of the treatment plant has allowed for the restoration of water quality in the Bennett Branch to a level where fish are now being stocked in the main stem of the Bennett Branch and fish have returned to the Dents Run tributary for the first time in roughly 100 years.

DEP began working with the Bennett Branch Watershed Association, other state and federal agencies and the mining industry in 2004 to restore water quality and reclaim abandoned mines in the lower 33 miles of the Bennett Branch and many of its tributaries.

Source: DEP News, 4/17/2014

## **York Water Company Joins the Partnership for Safe Water "Treatment" Program**

**T**he York Water Co. Water Plant in York County recently became the newest member of the Partnership for Safe Water Treatment Program, a voluntary effort to provide safe drinking water. Presently, the water system provides drinking water service to approximately 159,623 people. The York facility is the fourth plant in York County to join the treatment program.

The Partnership for Safe Water is made up of DEP, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Pennsylvania Section American Water Works Association (PA-AWWA) and other drinking water organizations. Its goal is to implement preventative measures that are based on optimizing treatment plant performance.

The treatment program is specifically geared toward identifying weaknesses in plant operation, design and administration that could lead to a breakthrough of waterborne disease-causing organisms into the finished water that is distributed to consumers. Correcting these weaknesses helps prevent waterborne disease outbreaks from pathogenic organisms like Cryptosporidium and Giardia.

By participating in the program, the York Water Co. Water Plant is working to provide an additional measure of protection to its drinking water consumers.

The Partnership for Safe Water also offers a “Distribution” Program for water suppliers who wish to pursue optimization of their distribution system.

Currently, 118 surface water treatment plants serving over 6.1 million people are now involved in Pennsylvania's Partnership for Safe Water Treatment Program.

For more information, visit [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us), keyword: filtration, or contact Kevin Anderson at 717-783-9764 or [keanderson@pa.gov](mailto:keanderson@pa.gov).

**Source:** DEP News, 4/17/2014

## “How’s My Waterway” Now More User-Friendly; App

## Lets Users Check Health of Waterways Anywhere in the US

**T**he U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released an enhanced version of “How’s My Waterway,” an app and website to help people find information on the condition of thousands of lakes, rivers and streams across the United States from their smart phone, tablet or desktop computer.

The [How’s My Waterway app and website](http://watersgeo.epa.gov/mywaterway/app), uses GPS technology or a user-entered zip code or city name to provide information about the quality of local water bodies. The new version of the site includes data on local drinking water sources, watersheds and efforts to protect waterways, as well as a map-oriented version of “How’s My Waterway” designed for museum kiosks, displays and touch screens, available at: <http://watersgeo.epa.gov/mywaterway/kiosk/>

“Communities and neighborhoods across the U.S. want to know that their local lakes, rivers and streams are healthy and safe to enjoy with their families, and providing that information is a priority for EPA,” said acting assistant administrator for EPA’s Office of Water Nancy Stoner. “The enhanced version of ‘How’s My Waterway’ provides easy, user-friendly access to the health of the places we swim, fish and boat, where we get our drinking water, and what is being done to curb water pollution. People can get this information whether researching at a desktop or standing streamside looking at a smart phone.”

The enhanced version includes new data and improvements based on user feedback to the original site, including localized information on:

- The waterways that supply drinking water to communities.
- The health of watersheds and organizations working to protect watersheds.
- Permits that limit pollutant discharge into waterways.

- Efforts to restore waterways to protect and improve fish habitats by the National Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Here's how to use "How's My Waterway":

- **SEARCH:** Go to <http://www.epa.gov/mywaterway> and allow GPS technology to identify the nearest streams, rivers or lakes or enter a zip code or city name.
- **REVIEW:** Instantly receive a list of waterways within five miles of the search location. Each waterway is identified as unpolluted, polluted or unassessed. A map option offers the user a view of the search area with the results color-coded by assessment status.
- **DISCOVER:** Once a specific lake, river or stream is selected, the How's My Waterway app and website provides information on the type of pollution reported for that waterway and what has been done by EPA and the states to reduce it. Additional reports and technical information is available for many waterways. Read simple descriptions of each type of water pollutant, including pollutant type, likely sources and potential health risks.
- **EXPLORE:** Related links page connects users to popular water information on beaches, drinking water and fish and wildlife habitat based on a user's search criteria.

EPA will also host a free webinar for the public on the new features of How's My Waterway on April 23 from 1 to 3 p.m. EDT. More information on the webinar:

<https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/427306106>

**Source:** EPA Press Release, 4/18/2014

## DEP to CAC: Chapter 78 Drilling Regs Will Not Be Finalized Until 2015

**H**ayley Book, Director of DEP's Policy Office, told DEP's Citizens Advisory Council Tuesday the agency was not likely

to finalize proposed changes to [Chapter 78 drilling regulations](#) until sometime in 2015.

Book said DEP received comments from over 25,000 commenters, mostly from letters from pro-environment and pro-industry individuals, that they plan to organize and review with the agency's Oil and Gas Technical Advisory Board this summer.

Book also said DEP is considering doing an Advanced Notice of Final Rulemaking when they are in position to finalize the regulation to allow one more opportunity for public comments before any final action by the Environmental Quality Board.

On another Marcellus Shale issue, Book said press reports about Chevron blocking access to the Greene County well fire site in February incorrectly said DEP did not get access to the site. Book said DEP inspectors had access, but not unrestricted access.

She noted a notice of violation sent to Chevron March 18 about the well fire had as one if its counts, "failure to provide access to a permitted oil and gas facility to properly identified Department personnel and agents, a violation of 58 Pa. C.S. Section 325(a), (b) and the express conditions of the well permits which all entry without notice or a search warrant."

Book also touched on these issues--

- **Community Environmental Projects:** The final policy guiding decisions on DEP accepting Community Environmental Project in-lieu of some penalty assessments will be published in the [April 19 PA Bulletin](#). (The final version of the policy will be available in [DEP's eLibrary](#) by searching for policy 012-4180-001.)
- **Agency Reorganization:** The Energy Office and pollution prevention programs have now been assigned to the Office of Policy; the Environmental Education Program has been moved to the Communications office.

Click [Here](#) for a copy of DEP's written monthly report to Council.

## Other Issues

The Council heard a presentation by Joel Koricich, District Mining Manager from the California Office, about the upcoming [Act 54 longwall mining impact report](#). Koricich said the report should be completed and available for Council review in May. DEP's contractor for the report is the University of Pittsburgh.

Koricich said this next Act 54 will be focused more on analyzing the structural damage and water supply issues caused by longwall mining, rather than just recounting the facts of how much damage there was.

DEP is required to prepare a report every five years on the impact of longwall mining. This will be the agency's fourth report.

The Council took action to form an ad hoc committee to review the report consisting of Council Chair Terry Dayton, Cynthia Carrow, John Waliser and Burt Waite.

Lee McDonnell, Director of the Bureau of Point and Non-Point Source Management, provided Council with an update on the Act 537 Sewage Planning and Permit Program. He talked about two issues-- reconciling sewage planning and alternative systems requirements and implementing [Act 41](#).

He said the agency is trying to update its Chapter 71, 72 and 72 sewage regulations to deal with an issue where 537 planning approvals needed for all subdivisions cannot use so-called alternative sewage treatment systems to meet the sewage requirements. They can only use conventional systems. McDonnell said there is general agreement the issue needs to be resolved within DEP's Sewage Advisory Committee, but some members want to do a surgical change and others want to do a broader update since the regulations have not been changed since 1997.

Council voted to send a letter to DEP Secretary Chris Abruzzo urging him to resolve the sewage planning and alternative system issue and undertake a wider review of Act 537 reforms.

Council also--

- Thanked members Nancy Perkins and James Clauser for the service to Council since they are leaving the group;
- Noted there are three members serving with expired terms-- Pat Lupo (Governor's appointment), Janet Kelm (House Speaker's appointment) and Don Welsh (Governor's appointment); and
- Noted there are four vacancies on the Council: 2 appointments by the Senate President Pro Tempore, 1 appointment by the House Speaker and 1 appointment by the Governor.

## Council Priorities

Council members also discussed priorities for the coming year deciding to focus their efforts on several issues, given their limited staff resources--

- Review of the Act 54 longwall mining impact report;
- DEP Program Performance, including reviewing the impact of budget and staffing cuts at DEP;
- Enhancing public participation and transparency;
- Continuing support for adoption of construction standards for private water wells; and
- Continuing its required review of air quality and other regulations presented to Council.

## Public Comments

During the public comments portion of the agenda, Council heard comments from--

- **Bonita Hoke, PA League of Women Voters**, who urged Council to give renewed attention to the review of DEP's Act 54 longwall mining impact report given the problems with structural damage and water supply issues created by mining. She also expressed concern about the problems DEP had gaining access to the site of the Greene County well explosion.
- **Stephen Kunz, Schmid & Company, Inc.**, noted it has been 20 years since Act 54 was enacted into law and longwall mining has changed significantly since then. For example,

he said longwall panels have increased from 700-800 feet to 1,500 feet wide which could result in more impacts over a much wider area. Based on these changes, he urged DEP to review some of its assumptions about how it regulates this activity.

The next meeting of Council will be Wednesday, May 21 starting at 10:00 a.m. in Room 105 of the Rachel Carson Building in Harrisburg.

For more information, visit the DEP's [Citizens Advisory Council](#) webpage.

Source: PA Environmental Digest, 4/21/2014

## **Susquehanna River Basin Commission May 8 Public Hearing on Water Withdrawals**

**T**he Susquehanna River Basin Commission holds a public hearing on water withdrawal requests on May 8 in Room 8E-B East Wing, Capitol Building, Harrisburg starting at 2:30. ([formal notice](#))

A copy of the [agenda](#) is available online. For more information, visit [SRBC's Meetings webpage](#).

Source: PA Environmental Digest, 4/21/2014

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