



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*

Gov. Wolf Appoints Patrick McDonnell Acting Secretary of DEP

Governor Tom Wolf on May 20 appointed Patrick McDonnell as the Acting Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) following the resignation of John Quigley.



DEP Acting Secretary Patrick McDonnell.

McDonnell most recently served as DEP's director of policy where he oversaw the agency's regulation and policy development processes. In addition, McDonnell ran the State Energy Office

and was charged with coordination of renewable energy and energy efficiency issues.

"My years here have taught me that DEP is one of the best teams to be a part of in the Commonwealth," McDonnell said in an email to staff. "Together I know we will continue to carry on some of the most vital work in state government."

Read [more](#).

Source: DEP News, 5/26/2016

EPA Releases CWSRF Allotment Report

EPA released the *Review of the Allotment of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Report to Congress* on May 24. The report presents the results of EPA's review of the current CWSRF allotment and its adequacy to address the water quality needs of eligible states, District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.

EPA prepared this report in response to Congress's request under section 5005 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014.

[Learn More.](#)

Source: Water Headlines from EPA, 5/26/2016

EPA Publishes Draft Environmental Justice 2020 Action Agenda

On May 23, EPA posted the draft Environmental Justice 2020 Action Agenda for public comment. The EJ 2020 Action Agenda is a strategic plan for environmental justice for 2016-2020. EJ 2020 will build on the foundation established by EPA's previous plan in 2014, as well as decades of significant environmental justice practice by the Agency, communities, and our partners. EPA envisions that this plan will help integrate environmental justice into everything the agency does, cultivate strong partnerships to improve on-the-ground results, and reduce disparities in the nation's most overburdened communities.

Achieving this vision will help to make vulnerable, environmentally burdened, and economically disadvantaged communities healthier, cleaner and more sustainable.

The public comment period will run until July 7, 2016.

[Learn More.](#)

Source: Water Headlines from EPA, 5/26/2016

DEP Celebrates Lake Appreciation Month

May is "Lake Appreciation Month," a time set aside by DEP to appreciate the value of Pennsylvania's local lakes and streams.

DEP staff regularly test the health of lakes throughout the commonwealth. Recently, Sherrill Leap, a water pollution biologist from DEP's Wilkes-Barre Office took a sample from Lilly Lake near Shickshinny in Luzerne County for chlorophyll

A, a group of related green pigments found in bacteria that aids in the growth of algae and invasive plants in bodies of water.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the water quality of Pennsylvania's lakes and streams.

Source: DEP News, 5/26/2016

Grove, Wagner Release Taxpayers' Caucus Report, Identify \$3 Billion in Savings

On May 24, 2016, state Rep. Seth Grove (R-York) and Sen. Scott Wagner (R-York) released a comprehensive report from the bicameral Taxpayers' Caucus, aimed at finding savings and efficiencies in state government. The report details over \$3 billion in potential savings to taxpayers—\$300 million more than Gov. Wolf proposed in tax hikes for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

The Taxpayers' Caucus is a bicameral working group of legislators that was founded as a result of the 2015-16 budget impasse, with the purpose of finding budget reforms which increase transparency and accountability, maximize government program efficiencies while reducing costs, and opportunities to eliminate or consolidate duplicative government programs.

"This report represents a new beginning for budget discussions in Pennsylvania; it is a change from the governor's status quo tax-and-spend policies. The taxpayers of Pennsylvania demand that the General Assembly work for them, instead of Governor Wolf's public sector union partners and hand-picked special interests. Our report has identified \$3 billion in potential savings to taxpayers. Governor Wolf wants to raise taxes on the hard-working middle class. In fact, he is seeking \$300 million more than we identified in the report. Harrisburg needs to change the way that it does business, and it needs to focus more on the needs of taxpayers. Our effort does that," said Grove and Wagner.

No savings to the taxpayers is ever too small, and the report includes recommendations to address

the 2016-17 cyclical budget deficit with department specific policy proposals and identifies savings ranging from \$43,000 from the Pennsylvania State Police to nearly \$1 billion from the Department of Human Services. The policy proposals are derived from recommendations from Auditor General Eugene DePasquale, Gov. Tom Wolf and legislators.

"Our recommendations come from a wide array of backgrounds; many of our suggestions have bipartisan support and come directly from the auditor general and governor. The difference however, is when Gov. Wolf touts \$150 million in savings from his "GO-TIME" initiative; he is turning that money back into other programs for higher spending. We believe when savings have been identified, they should be savings for the taxpayers and should not be used for further spending elsewhere. It is time for the General Assembly to show budgetary restraint. As stewards of taxpayer dollars, we must end Harrisburg's status quo of asking taxpayers to foot the bill for wasteful spending," added Grove and Wagner.

The report also takes aim at addressing the Wolf Administration's lack of spending transparency during the budget impasse. The Wolf administration questionably spent thousands of dollars during the budget impasse, with little or no rationale, including \$140,000 spent on a "study of domesticated animals" while funds were being withheld from school districts. Reconciliation of the governor's budget impasse spending could result in as much as \$200 million in savings to taxpayers.

"Short-and long-term budget reforms are necessary to get our state back on track. The House and Senate should move to a two-year budgeting process, which includes priority-based and performance-based budgeting procedures. Legislative oversight is critical to ensure taxpayers are receiving the high quality services which they are paying for," said Grove and Wagner.

Electronic copies of the report are available at [RepGrove.com](http://www.repgrove.com/) <http://www.repgrove.com/> and [SenatorScottWagner.com/](http://www.senatorscottwagner.com/) <http://www.senatorscottwagner.com/>.

Source: House Republican Caucus, 5/24/2016

Rep. Everett: Resolution for Water Use Fee Study to Fund Water Quality Improvements

Rep. Garth Everett (R-Lycoming), who represents Pennsylvania on the Chesapeake Bay Commission, introduced a bipartisan resolution -- [House Resolution 908](#) -- calling for a study of a new water use fee to fund water quality improvement programs.

The resolution was co-sponsored by Rep. David Millard (R-Columbia), Rep. Curtis Thomas (D-Philadelphia), Rep. Jeff Wheeland (R-Lycoming), Rep. Mark Rozzi (D-Berks), Rep. Michael O'Brien (D-Philadelphia) and Rep. Sandra Major (R-Susquehanna).

"As a member of the Pennsylvania Delegation of the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Environmental Resources & Energy, Game & Fisheries and Appropriations Committees, I am acutely aware of the challenges facing our water resources and water quality here in Pennsylvania and the need to come up with innovative funding mechanisms to reinvest in our land and water and the programs and agencies charged with their stewardship," said Rep. Everett.

"Pennsylvania is estimated to have more than 86,000 miles of streams and rivers, nearly 4,000 lakes covering 161,455 acres, and 80 trillion gallons of groundwater," explained Rep. Everett. "The commercial demand for these waters continues to grow, with daily withdrawals of billions of gallons of the Commonwealth's surface and groundwater.

"The water directly withdrawn from our streams, lakes and rivers is owned by the citizens of the Commonwealth and we are allowing this valuable asset to be utilized by commercial and industrial users at no cost," noted Rep. Everett. "Some of this water is never returned to the water cycle and much that is returned is in a degraded condition from when it was withdrawn."

Rep. Everett's resolution directs the [Legislative Budget and Finance Committee](#) to conduct a study of the establishment, implementation, and administration of fees for the consumptive use and the use and return of "waters of the Commonwealth" by industrial and commercial users.

The study would look at the establishment of both a royalty fee for the consumptive use of water and a royalty fee for water used and returned. It would examine proposed and successful attempts of other states to assess fees for the use of water; identify the uses to which the fees would apply; estimate the revenue generating potential of the fees; and evaluate how to assess, collect, and manage the proceeds of the royalty fees.

The study would also make recommendations on creating a new Water Quality Improvement Fund and on how the proceeds of the fees might be apportioned among the major watersheds in the Commonwealth and the departments and agencies involved in water quality efforts in Pennsylvania.

Examples might be funding for Growing Greener, water quality improvements to meet our Chesapeake Bay and other TMDL requirements and cleanup of our many impaired streams.

"Please join me in the pursuit of constructive solutions to meet our constitutional obligation to the citizens of Pennsylvania to provide pure water and to preserve the natural values of our environment by co-sponsoring this Resolution," said Rep. Everett in his co-sponsor memo to colleagues.

A [sponsor summary](#) is available.

The resolution was referred to the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee for consideration.

Rep. John Maher (R-Allegheny) serves as Majority Chair of the House Environmental Committee and can be contacted by sending email to: jmaher@pahousegop.com. Rep. Greg Vitali (D-Delaware) serves as Minority Chair and can be contacted by sending email to: gvitali@pahouse.net

Source: PA Environmental Digest, 5/30/2016

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