

water Policy News

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters PA-CEF Water Resources Education Network

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[Using Economic Incentives to Manage Stormwater Runoff in the Shepherd Creek Watershed, Part 1](#)

(US EPA, 2008, 65 pp)

[Drinking Water Quality in Rural Pennsylvania and the Effect of Management Practices](#)

(Center for Rural PA, 2009, 24 pp)

Marcellus Shale Gas and Water Resources

WEBINAR, February 19, 1-2 PM

Bryan Swistock, Penn State Cooperative Extension water resources specialist, will talk about the effects of natural-gas drilling on water quality and quantity during a free online seminar at 1 p.m. on Feb. 19.

The current boom in natural-gas well drilling in the state is a concern for Pennsylvania's streams and groundwater. "Decades ago, we weren't careful with coal mining. As a result, we are still paying huge sums to clean up acid mine drainage from that period, and we will be for a long time," says Swistock. "We need to be careful and vigilant, or we could see lasting damage to our water resources from so many deep gas wells being drilled across Pennsylvania."

Registration is required. Visit

<http://naturalgas.extension.psu.edu/WebinarRegistration.htm>

For more information about natural gas issues in PA, visit:

<http://naturalgas.extension.psu.edu/>

WREN Requires Active Municipal Partners

Experienced WREN hands know that working with local officials is important to achieving real improvement in protecting water resources. When municipal officials are actively involved in WREN projects, the community benefits.

As we review applications in the next round of [WREN grants](#), we will look closely at how municipal partners will be involved in WREN funded projects. Thus, if you're thinking of applying for a WREN grant, the time to start talking with your local officials is now!

What qualifies as a municipal partner? A municipal (local or county) Environmental Advisory Council does, provided that the municipality or county endorses the project. A Conservation District does not (but makes a great partner, and brings many resources to projects). The key difference is that municipalities have the power to regulate land uses

through ordinances so as to protect water resources.

Recent WREN projects that have active municipal partners include [Clarion County Conservation District's](#) project to [stencil storm drains](#) in Clarion Borough. The Borough maintenance department is a partner in the project, provided paint and helped locate drains to stencil.

[Warrington Township](#) in Bucks County is the project leader, working through their EAC and a variety of other partners in a [Healthy Yards Initiative](#). The township offers a number of programs, including an article in the township [newsletter](#), to help residents reduce runoff and non-point source pollution from their yards.

Municipalities in urban areas are struggling with the MS4 (municipal separate stormwater sewer systems) requirements and would welcome partners in educational programs that are NOT included in their MS4 permits (WREN cannot fund projects that implement MS4 permit conditions). More rural municipalities are becoming aware of the role they play in protecting streams, lakes and drinking water supplies. Start talking with your local officials and see where they need help so you can develop a true partnership.

Water Systems Cooperate to Protect Source Water

River Alert Information Network (RAIN) starts-up in Pittsburgh

When 33 water systems get together to protect their drinking water sources, good things are likely to happen, and that seems to be the case with the 33 systems that draw their source water from the Monongahela, Allegheny, Youghiogheny and upper Ohio rivers and are part of the River Alert Information Network, or RAIN.

With the help of Tom McCaffery, Source Water Protection Facilitator in the Southwest Regional Office of PA Dept of Environmental Protection, a partnership of the water systems, California University and the Riverside Center for Information came together as RAIN, with the goal of developing a regional source water protection program. The centerpiece of the program will be an automated water monitoring and early warning system for the rivers that supply drinking water to 1.7 million people in the area.

The group recognized, however, that their first step should be to educate and raise awareness of the need to protect drinking water sources among local, state and federal officials and the general public. For that effort they turned to WREN.

With a \$5,000 grant from WREN, and led by the Riverside Center for Innovation, 3 public meetings were held in the Fall of 2008 and a newsletter, a brochure and a display were produced. The purpose of the meetings and the informational pieces was to garner support for the

proposed early warning system.

A capital budget has been developed and RAIN is now looking for \$1.5 million to purchase and install the monitoring equipment. Their cause was helped greatly with the discovery, last fall of very high levels of total dissolved solids in the Monongahela River. After investigation of sources, PA DEP ordered wastewater plants to reduce their intake of wastewater from gas drilling operations. Latest reports, in January of this year, showed that the TDS levels had dropped considerably. But the scare alerted many, including DEP Secretary John Hanger, to the need for continuous monitoring of river water quality. RAIN has since submitted their funding proposal to DEP, and is also working with the Army Corps of Engineers and elected officials.

All the rivers are in western PA, and are the rivers that come together to make Pittsburgh the "Three River City." For more information on RAIN, contact [Adrienne Buka](#) at Riverside Center for Innovation, Read more at, www.3rain.org. Visit wren.palwv.org to read about their WREN project.

\$\$ For Infrastructure in PA

\$1.2 billion was made available for water and wastewater projects in PA in 2008, and that's before any dollars come into the state from the federal stimulus funds.

In December the [Commonwealth Financing Authority](#) released its guidelines for the H2O program, the funding authorized by Act 63 of 2008, formerly Senate Bill 2. Act 63 will provide \$800 million over the next 10 years for critical water, sewer, flood control projects and repairs to unsafe, high-hazard dams in areas outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The debt service on the bonds will be repaid using uncommitted gaming revenues distributed by the Commonwealth Financing Authority.

The \$400 million in funding approved by the voters in November is being administered by Pennvest, the [Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority](#). The referendum was authorized by Act 64 of 2008, formerly Senate Bill 1341. Pennvest started distributing that funding at its January 26 meeting. According to the Pennvest website, "no new requirements or special applications are needed for communities to access this funding." Pennvest has also announced that, in anticipation of "a significant amount of federal water-related infrastructure funding ... in early 2009" it is waiving its requirement that DEP and other permits be in place before funding applications are submitted, for the February 16 application deadline (for the April funding meeting).

Both funding programs provide both grants and loans. Eligible applicants for the H2O program are municipalities and municipal authorities and eligible projects are water supply, sewage disposal or storm water systems, including regionalization of systems. The H2O program also provides funding for flood control projects and repair of "high hazard unsafe dams."

Penn vest's programs provide for a wider group applicants, and projects, including loans to homeowners for repair of septic systems. Pennvest funds can also be used to provide the 50% match required by the H2O program.

Water Policy News is published three times a year by the Water Resources Education Network, a project of the League of Women Voters of PA - Citizen Education Fund. Please send your water education related programs and activities to [WREN Communications Director](#).

Visit wren.palwv.org to learn more about WREN.

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