



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

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**Berks County
Water & Sewer**
ASSOCIATION

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DEP Increases Permitting Efficiency, Maintains Environmental Protection Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) continues its efforts to maintain environmental protections and even increased permitting efficiency throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, announcing today that staff have taken final action on nearly 20,000 permit applications since March. DEP used innovative cloud-based tools and Governor Tom Wolf's ongoing e-Permitting initiative to improve efficiency while protecting the environment.

"Thanks to the tireless work of staff, DEP is processing 94 percent of applications within the Permit Decision Guarantee timeframe," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "It is a testament to the dedication of DEP staff that they are demonstrating high performance standards despite the tumult caused by the pandemic."

Since telework began in March 2020, DEP has processed 19,971 permit applications and authorizations. For applications covered by the PDG, DEP processed 4,975 applications, with 4,663

(94 percent) within the Permit Decision Guarantee (PDG) timeframe.

"Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, DEP staff have ensured that permit applications are thoroughly reviewed," said McDonnell. "Through new technology solutions like the OnBase permit application submissions, we are improving the efficiency of our reviews while still ensuring compliance with environmental laws and regulations."

DEP launched the **OnBase permit submission tool** in June 2020

<https://www.ahsdep.pa.gov/NewsRoomPublic/SearchResults.aspx?id=21828&typeid=1> to better help businesses and streamline permit review. Since the tool was launched, there have been more than 2,000 applications submitted. Throughout the Wolf administration, DEP has worked to increase availability of online permit application tools, including common permits like **Chp. 105** <https://www.deppa.gov/Business/Water/Waterways/Pages/ePermitting.aspx> wetland and waterway encroachment permits.

Guidance for the OnBase permit application tool can be found here

http://files.dep.state.pa.us/DataAndTools/Applications/FormUpload/OnBase_form_May132020.pdf.

Instructions for applicants to submit permit fees can be found here

http://files.dep.state.pa.us/DataAndTools/Applications/FormUpload/OnBase_payment_submission_form_06182020.pdf .

Source: DEP Press Release, 10/23/2020

PUC Hosts “Berks Be Wise” Virtual Social Services Conference

Hundreds of front-line providers to participate in 17th annual event on Oct. 28

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), the County of Berks and local utilities are virtually hosting the 17th annual Berks County “Be Wise” social service conference on Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2020.

With the Commonwealth’s ongoing response to the current pandemic, this year’s daylong program will be conducted via Virtual Zoom Conference – with PUC Chairman Gladys Brown Dutrieuille providing an opening message highlighting the PUC’s actions during the COVID-19 pandemic, its annual “Prepare Now” campaign, and energy affordability and assistance programs for income-qualified consumers.

The PUC’s annual “train-the-trainer” events bring together front-line community partners, utilities and key stakeholders.

The 2020 Berks County “Be Wise” event features panel discussions on such topics as Utility Responses to COVID-19 - Regulatory, Program and Policy Updates; Opportunities for Homeless Students; Food Insecurities and Community Engagement; Mental Health and Substance Abuse Disorder Treatment; Autism Services and Support; Public Housing and Homeownership Services; Human Trafficking 101 Training; and Support for LGBTQ individuals.

Berks Be Wise is part of the PUC’s annual “train-the-trainer” events bringing together front-line community partners, utilities and key

stakeholders in highlighting energy efficiency, conservation and customer assistance programs intended to help income-qualified households maintain essential utility services.

About the PUC

Pennsylvania’s 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.

Visit the PUC’s website at <http://www.puc.pa.gov/> for recent news releases and video of select proceedings. You can also follow us on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube. Search for the “Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission” or “PA PUC” on your favorite social media channel for updates on utility issues and other helpful consumer information.

Source: PUC Press Release, 10/22/2020

Governor Wolf Announces \$181 Million Investment in Water Infrastructure Projects in 12 Counties

On October 21, 2020, Governor Tom Wolf announced the investment of \$181 million for 16 drinking water, wastewater and non-point source projects across 12 counties through the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST).

"As our citizens and businesses continue to adapt to an ever-changing environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our top priority must be ensuring secure infrastructure for community water," said Gov. Wolf. "Access to clean drinking water is foundational to rebuilding and the growth of our communities. These projects will continue to

ensure the safety and welfare of thousands of Pennsylvanians."

The funding for these projects originates from a combination of state funds approved by voters, Growing Greener, Marcellus Legacy funds, federal grants to PENNVEST from the Environmental Protection Agency and recycled loan repayments from previous PENNVEST funding awards. Funds for these projects are disbursed after expenses for work are paid and receipts are submitted to PENNVEST for review.

"Investments in clean water infrastructure ensure that our new normal is built upon safe and secure facilities that Pennsylvania can rely on," said Gov. Wolf. "There is no better step toward a stronger future than the commitments we're making today for these communities."

A list of project summaries follows:

Drinking Water Projects

Blair County

- ***Altoona Water Authority** - received a \$7,500,000 loan to replace existing air preparation and ozone generation systems with new liquid oxygen storage and feed gas preparation systems. The project will proactively address Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) ozone requirements and will increase the reliability of drinking water to service communities.

Huntingdon County

- **Petersburg Borough** - received a \$348,585 loan and a \$131,415 grant to install new flow meters, a new valve control system and vented well cap. The project will increase safe drinking water reliability and bring the system into compliance with DEP's Chapter 109 regulations.

Lancaster County

- ***City of Lancaster** - received a \$10,550,000 loan to install three new emergency power generators and construct 7,500 feet of water

main. The project will ensure compliance with DEP's rule of uninterrupted service and protect the service community from potential outages due to main breaks.

Montgomery County

- ***Aqua America, Inc.** - received a \$3,970,600 loan to install two anion exchange vessels, a new well pump, and upgrade a chemical treatment system to address detected levels of perfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS). The project will address potential health hazards in the raw water supply, which are below the current Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Health Advisory level

Somerset County

- **Indian Lake Borough** - received a \$1,573,245 loan to rehabilitate a well source and install a new, 200,000-gallon storage tank, ensuring adequate system capacity. The project will address iron and manganese exceedances in well sources, addressing a DEP order, and increase available water to the customer base.
- **Windber Area Authority** - received a \$940,000 loan to rehabilitate a 511,000-gallon storage tank and install a second storage tank to increase storage capacity for the community. The project will eliminate potential health hazards by addressing secondary contaminants in well sources and improve reliability of service through increase storage.

Wastewater Projects

Allegheny County

- ****Elizabeth Township** - received a \$17,299,863 loan to install a new pump station and conveyance system, including a new force main to convey sewage to an existing multi-municipal treatment center in McKeesport. The project addresses a DEP Consent Order initiated in 2016 and will also reduce wet weather overflows into a nearby water source.

Blair County

- ****Altoona Water Authority** - received a \$36,615,700 loan to install a class A digester and biosolids thermal dryer, while also replacing aeration blowers and dewatering facilities. This Guaranteed Energy Savings Act (GESA) project will decrease the need to apply biosolids on nearby farm fields, capture nearly all of the gas output on fixed-cover digesters, and dramatically reduce energy bills to the authority.

Butler County

- **Marion Township** - received a \$2,717,702 grant and a \$1,389,790 loan to construct a new influent pump station and sand filter sewage treatment plant, while also making improvements to the collection system. The improvements will eliminate inadequately treated sewage discharges from the existing lagoon and address a 54 percent confirmed onlot system malfunction rate, satisfying a DEP Consent Order.

Dauphin County

- ****Capital Region Water** - received a \$65,000,000 loan to make several improvements as part of an existing capital improvement plan, including improvements to the project clarifier and rehabilitation of the Front Street and Paxton Creek interceptors. The loan is part of PENNVEST's programmatic financing initiative, which addresses long-term approved capital improvements. The project will reduce infiltration into the sewer system, address collection and conveyance issues that cause wet weather backups, and address a federal consent decree.

Montour County

- **Washingtonville Municipal Authority** - received a \$2,774,376 grant and a \$1,291,624 loan to construct a new wastewater treatment facility, including new process tanks, sludge storage, and effluent disinfection. The project will provide for efficient preventive maintenance by replacing an outdated treatment plant that is nearing the end of useful life.

Venango County

- ****General Authority of the City of Franklin** - received a \$4,347,750 loan to construct approximately 13,000 feet of sanitary sewer pipe and rehabilitate approximately 4,500 feet of existing pipe. The project will eliminate untreated sewage overflows and backups during wet weather, while also satisfying a DEP Corrective Action Plan.

Washington County

- ****Clairton Municipal Authority** - received a \$23,000,000 loan to install four membrane bioreactor basins, two effluent storage tanks, clarifiers, and contact tanks. The project will address the system's Long Term Control Plan, reducing Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) bypasses, and reduce wet weather overflows into receiving streams.

Wayne County

- **LT Realty, Inc.** - received a \$478,665 loan to replace the existing, malfunctioning sand mound onlot septic system with a new packaged wastewater treatment plant. The project will address needs of critical populations at a senior living facility and eliminate discharges of untreated sewage into a tributary of Dyberry Creek.

Non-Point Source Projects

Lancaster County

- ****Lancaster County Conservation District** - received a \$402,880 grant to install an efficient manure storage and transfer system at the Levi Fisher farm, including stream crossings and a riparian buffer. The project will reduce nutrient run-off into the Pequea Creek, which is limited by a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).
- ****Warwick Township** - received a \$556,730 grant to install an efficient manure removal and transfer system at the Jeff Balmer farm. The project will eliminate 1,914 pounds of sediment, 8,887 pounds of nitrogen, and 3,852 pounds of phosphorus annually, drastically improving the

Hammer Creek, a tributary to the Cocalico Creek and Chesapeake Bay.

* denotes projects that are funded with Drinking Water State Revolving Funds

** denotes projects that are funded with Clean Water State Revolving Funds

Source: Governor Wolf's Press Office, 10/21/2020

SRBC Announces Proposed Policy - Incenting the Use of Impaired Waters Policy

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission has released a **proposed policy** <https://www.srbc.net/regulatory/policies-guidance/docs/lesser-quality-waters-policy-draft.pdf> to update the Commission's **existing policy** <https://www.srbc.net/regulatory/policies-guidance/docs/application-fee-mine-drainage-withdrawal-policy-2009-01.pdf> and resolution <https://www.srbc.net/regulatory/policies-guidance/docs/use-lesser-quality-waters-resolution-2012-01.pdf> that encouraged the use of impaired waters. Specifically, the policy addresses fee and timing of review incentives for 1) the use of waters impaired by abandoned mine drainage or 2) treated wastewater for recycling or reuse.

This policy offers incentives for the use of these waters with respect to the management and protection of the water resources of the basin. The water that is incentivized for use under this policy is a liability, and, generally, will do more harm than good if released into the environment, thereby offsetting flow regime and/or hydrologic cycle concerns potentially associated with its removal from local hydrology. This policy will incentivize withdrawals of impaired waters, leaving more pristine waterways and aquifers untouched. Additionally, this policy will incentivize the growing number of projects looking to recycle and reuse wastewater for beneficial purposes.

The proposed policy offers four incentives for the use of these waters. Three of the incentives offer

partial or full waiver of application and consumptive use mitigation fees:

1. Direct withdrawal or consumptive use from untreated AMD impaired source;
2. Construct AMD treatment for a withdrawal or consumptive use of the treated discharge; or
3. Consumptive use of treated wastewater.

The fourth incentive offers prioritization of regulatory review for a project using impaired waters in any of the three scenarios above.

The withdrawal and consumptive use of these waters are subject to the full regulatory review process under 18 CFR Part 806. The use of impaired waters must be beneficial and not adverse to the water resources of the Basin.

The Commission has scheduled a public hearing on the proposed policy to be held on November 05, 2020 at 2:30pm. This hearing will be held by telephone rather than at a physical location. Conference Call # 1-888-387-8686, the Conference Room Code # 9179686050.

Comments may be submitted on the Commission's **Public Comment web page** <https://www.srbc.net/about/meetings-events/meeting-comment/default.aspx?type=12&cat=32>, mailed to: Jason E. Oyler, Esq., General Counsel, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, 4423 N Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110-1788, or submitted by email to regcomments@srbc.net. **The deadline to submit comments specific to the proposed policy is November 18, 2020.**

Source: SRBC Press Release, 10/20/2020

Grants Available to Help Farmers and Small Businesses Save Money and Reduce Pollution

Grant funding for energy efficiency and pollution prevention projects for small business owners and farmers is still available from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) through the Small Business Advantage Grant program.

"This grant program was created with small businesses and farmers in mind. There are tremendous monetary savings available to Pennsylvania's small business owners by installing energy-efficient equipment, such as boilers, LED lighting, and Energy Star certified heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "Pennsylvania farmers can also benefit by using these funds to undertake projects which will divert sediment and nutrient runoff from our waterways."

Pennsylvania farmers and other small business owners with 100 or fewer full-time employees are eligible for the grants. Projects must save the business a minimum of \$500 and 25 percent annually in energy consumption or pollution related expenses. Natural resource protection projects are exempt from the minimums; however, the projects must be able to quantify sediment and nutrient reductions into nearby waterways.

Businesses can apply for 50 percent matching funds for equipment or materials, up to \$7,000, when adopting energy-efficient or pollution prevention equipment or processes. Applications are considered on a first come, first served basis, and will be accepted until fiscal year 2020-21 funds are exhausted, or Monday, April 12, 2021, whichever occurs first.

The complete grant application package is available by visiting the **DEP Small Business Ombudsman's Office's site**
<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/GrantsLoansRebates/SmallBusinessOmbudsmanOffice/Pages/Small%20Business%20Advantage%20Grant.aspx> .

To contact the Small Business Ombudsman's Office, call 717-772-5160 or email epadvantagegrant@pa.gov.

Source: DEP Press Release, 10/20/2020

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