



Delaware River Basin Commission

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DRBC WATER MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING June 14, 2007

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bob Molzahn	Water Resources Association, WMAC Chair
William Gast	PA Department of Environmental Protection
Janet Bowers	Chester County Water Resources Authority
George Kunkel*	Philadelphia Water Department (for Howard Neukrug)
Mike Bleicher*	NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection
Mary Ellen Noble	Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Edie Stevens	League of Women Voters of PA
John Mello	US EPA Region 2
Ron Sloto	US Geological Survey

*Denotes alternate or non-official member.

DRBC STAFF:

Dr. Kenneth Najjar, Planning & Implementation – Branch head
David Sayers, Planning & Implementation

REVIEW OF MINUTES / REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 am by Mr. Bob Molzahn, chair of the committee. The minutes from the September 14, 2006 meeting were reviewed and approved without changes. Today's agenda was also reviewed and approved by the committee.

WATER ACCOUNTABILITY:

David Sayers of DRBC staff provided committee members with an overview of activity by the Water Accountability subcommittee which met three times since the last full WMAC committee meeting (brief minutes from the subcommittee's May 3 2007 meeting were distributed). During that time the subcommittee prepared a draft resolution to amend the DRBC Water Code in relation to Water Accountability issues. The purpose of the discussion on this topic was to review the draft resolution and obtain the committee's input on related discussion items.

Mr. Sayers noted that a key aspect of the proposed resolution is the phased approach to implementation of the new Water Accountability rules. The phased approach addresses the issue that the AWWA methodology is relatively new (in regulatory application) and performance indicators and standards for purveyors are not yet well defined and are not specified in the proposed resolution. The committee discussed the rationale for the phased implementation which includes an initial voluntary period during which purveyors will be encouraged to report in the new format. This will provide a period of time for DRBC and the States to gather data (and learn from experience in other states outside the Basin) to help establish appropriate performance indicators.

Mr. George Kunkel noted that even in the absence of specific performance indicators, it is anticipated that the audit process will provide valuable information to system operators and regulators. The use of the audit should help purveyors to better understand their system and identify areas of water loss which also represent financial losses and thereby provide an incentive for purveyors to address those losses. At the same time, regulators will begin to gather data on water losses that are more meaningful than the traditional approach, which will help to target systems with the greatest physical water losses. Mr. Kunkel noted that the water audit software has a cost indicator that should provide a further incentive for purveyors to undertake the audit as it can identify the cost of water losses. Mr. Kunkel noted that traditional regulatory audits provided no information regarding the costs of water lost. Ms. Jan Bowers suggested that during the phased implementation, purveyors could set their own standards which would be reviewed by DRBC and the states.

During the subcommittee sessions the issue of meter calibration had arisen, specifically whether greater accuracy than 5% should be required at the source level, as per DRBC's current regulations. Mr. Kunkel noted that although greater accuracy is possible and desirable, he withdrew furthering the issue at this time, in the interest of advancing the vote by WMAC to approve the resolution and send it to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Mr. Bill Gast made a motion to approve the resolution with the edits proposed during the discussion, Ms. Mary Ellen Noble seconded the motion; a vote was taken and the motion was approved. The resolution will be presented to the Commissioners at the next Commission meeting (Sept, 07)

WATER MANAGEMENT UPDATES:

State of the Basin Report. Dr. Ken Najjar provided an update on progress with the State of the Basin Report. Dr. Najjar noted that the report is behind schedule with the DRBC still working with Jerry Kauffman of the University of Delaware. There have been many challenges in compiling the data, with data gaps and other issues making it difficult to tell a clear story for many parameters and issues. The purpose of the State of the Basin report is to give a status of key issues and where possible show trends over the last 10 or 15 years.

Basin Plan Implementation

The remainder of the meeting was spent reviewing the matrix of Basin Plan objectives that fall under the WMAC's area of expertise:

i) Water Budget Projects: Dr. Najjar noted that there is a lot of work going on with water budgets in the basin. Two major studies were performed by the USGS; one was a specific water budget project covering five watersheds, the other was a basin-wide assessment of groundwater availability which is another form of water budget. A GIS-based water budget screening tool has been developed by the USGS for the PA State Water Plan; it is also being applied in the Wissahickon Pilot Critical Area Resource Plan (CARP) project. Related to this, the Pennsylvania DEP Growing Greener Project on instream flows with the Nature Conservancy is still in progress. Also, the work being done by NJDEP and the USGS using the HIP, (Hydrologic Integrity Protocol) is another instream flow-related effort which falls under the broad title of water budgeting. Ms. Bowers noted that we should probably look at all the various water budgeting approaches and determine what the relative merits are and what is the role of water budgets in water management? The committee agreed this would be a good topic for discussion at a future meeting.

ii) Water Transfers: There are a number of objectives in the basin plan about water transfers. WMAC formed a subcommittee and ultimately approved a position statement on this issue which was presented to, and approved by, DRBC Commissioners. In investigating the issue of transfers the committee concluded

that although transfers can be an issue, they are not a single stand-alone issue and perhaps the best way to address them is to review the general Project Review procedures and ensure the transfers are handled correctly as one of several related water management issues such as consumptive use and water efficiency. Even in cases where there is not a watershed boundary crossing, the water may be taken out of the top of the watershed and put back at the bottom and that could have just as significant an impact to the watershed as a transfer. The position statement indicated that DRBC we will go back and look at all these issues for review and not specifically pull out transfers. That is another issue this committee has to deal with at some point.

iii) Water Reuse: Water reuse has been identified as an objective in the Basin Plan; the committee noted that this is an area for further discussion and Ms. Bowers noted that this committee should be looking at this issue, and what the options are for reuse, at a future meeting.

Ms. Mary Ellen Noble noted that the issue of climate change and its potential impact on water supply needs to be evaluated. Ms. Noble pointed out that there is little consensus on likely impacts but some conservative assumptions should be developed and built into the supply-demand planning work being undertaken by DRBC and the Army Corps.

Mr. Molzahn noted that he and David Sayers were working together with the Philadelphia Water Department in putting together a Spring Conference on the Early Warning System.

MEETING ADJOURNED:

The meeting adjourned; the next WMAC meeting will be scheduled as necessary.

(The next meeting was later scheduled for May 2, 2008 at DRBC offices in Trenton, NJ.)