

Chapter XVIII - Water Supply and Utilities Plan

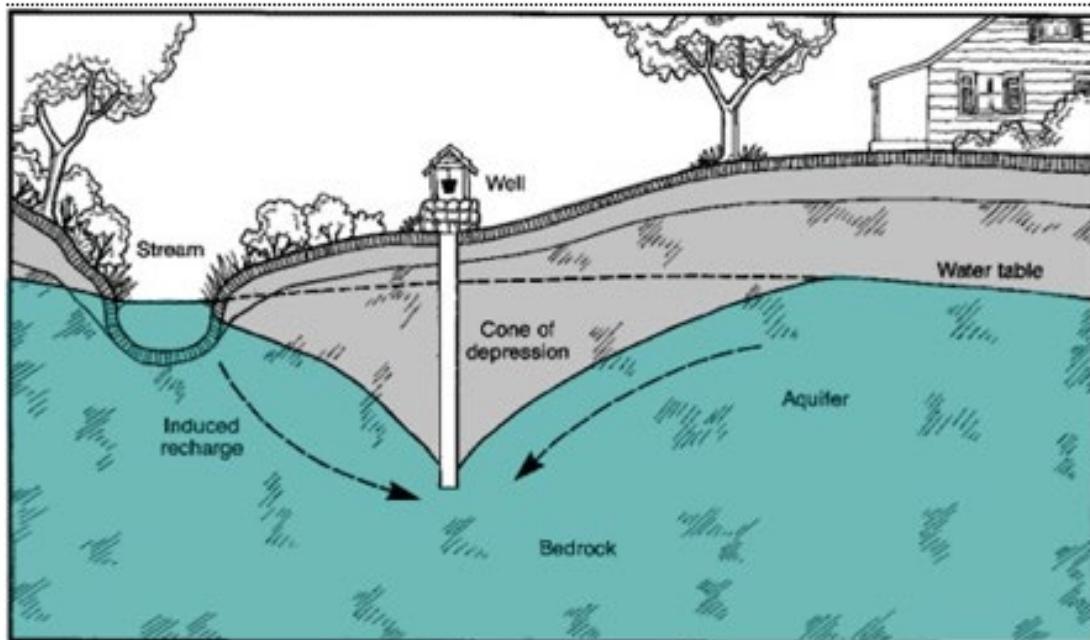
Introduction

This Water Supply and Utilities Plan is intended to address specific requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Section 301(b) which specifically mandates the preparation of:

"a plan for the reliable supply of water, considering current and future water resources availability, uses and limitations, including provisions adequate to protect water supply sources. Any such plan shall be generally consistent with the State Water Plan and any applicable water resources plan adopted by a river basin commission. It shall also contain a statement recognizing that:

1. Lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities.
2. Commercial agriculture production impacts water supply sources.

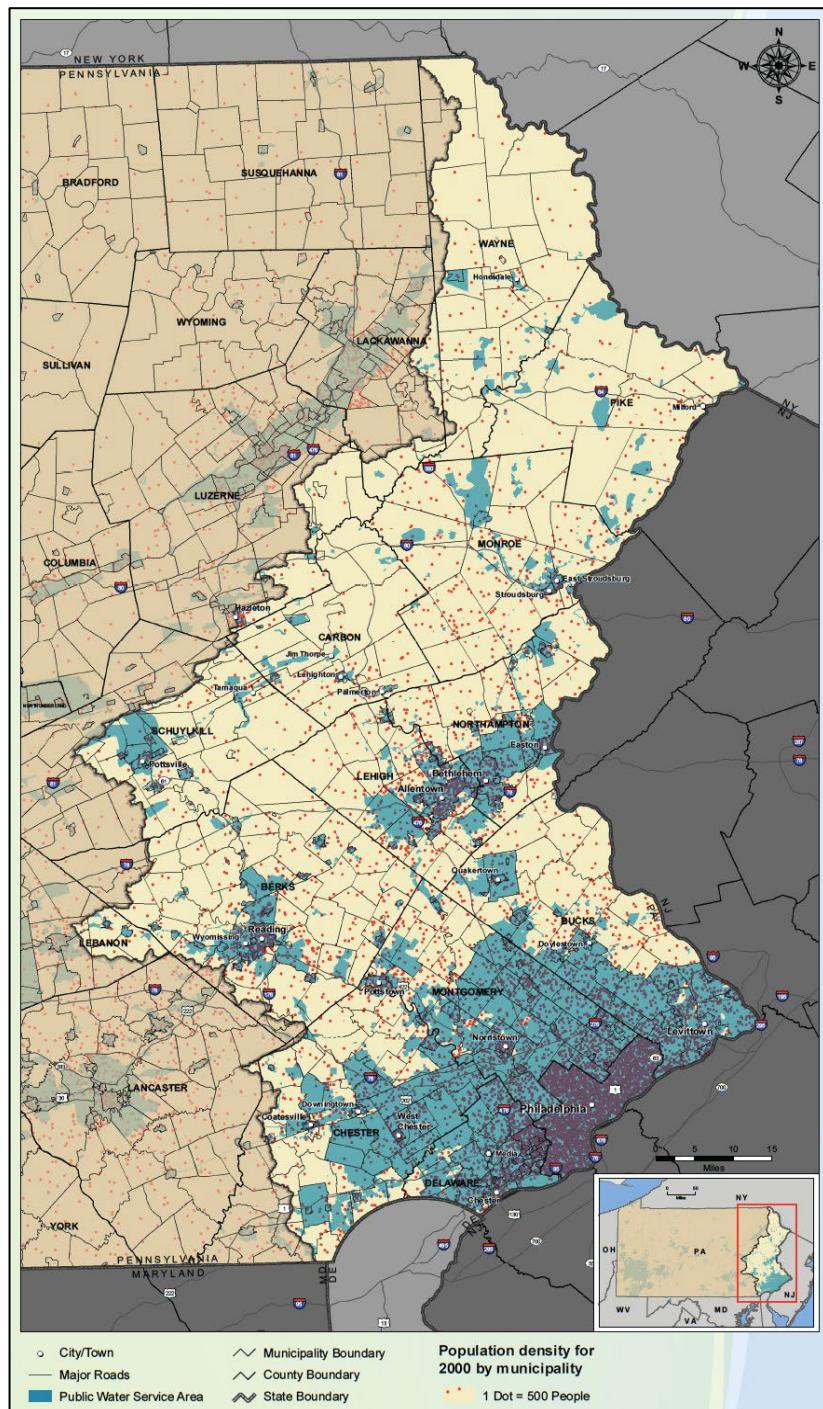
The above statement is fully incorporated, by reference, in this plan. Wayne County's commercial agriculture industry has not, historically, required large amounts of water for irrigation or agricultural processing as in the case of some other regions. Nonetheless, water supply is essential to beef and dairy operations and certain other activities and, therefore, agriculture remains a priority use for the local water supply.



Source: Pennsylvania Water Resources Education Network

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The mining of natural gas in Wayne County (the Delaware river Basin) has been prohibited by the Delaware River Basin Commission. Ongoing litigation is occurring as the County and landowners would profit from the development of this natural resource, shown not to have a detrimental impact to surface water quality within the neighboring Susquehanna River Watershed. The economic importance of this industry to the region demands these matters be dealt with expeditiously while also protecting its abundant water supply, a key resource and marketable comparative advantage in attracting tourism, securing other economic growth and ensuring a high quality of life for residents and visitors.



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The Community Facilities Analysis and Natural Resources Analysis (Sections III and VI, respectively, of this Comprehensive Plan) outline some of the important facts with respect to Wayne County's water supply. These include the following:

- The Catskill geologic formation is the most important source of ground water throughout Wayne County with more wells drilled into this group than any other. This formation and others associated with it, contain large supplies of underground water. Yields are typically good and water supply is not the issue in Wayne County that it is in many other areas of Pennsylvania and upstate New York.
- The majority of Wayne County residents are served by individual water supply wells. There are, nonetheless, both public and private central water systems throughout the County, many of them serving small communities. Most of the service is provided by five water companies, including the Southern Wayne County Water and Sewer Authority system, which serves the Hideout in Lake and Salem Townships. Maintaining and upgrading these systems, with the increase in population respectively amongst the private communities and age of the systems, is a high priority and has received state support in recent years by way of funding and grants. Public water supply service areas are depicted in blue on the Pennsylvania Water Plan map shown on page XVIII-2, along with population density, demonstrating the lack of major impacts on the water supply in Wayne County compared to other parts of the Delaware River watershed.

The Pennsylvania State Water Plan includes Wayne County in two specific regions for planning purposes; the Upper/Middle Susquehanna and the Delaware River watersheds (see Watersheds Map at end of this Chapter). These, in turn, are broken down into sub-basins. Wayne County includes land in the Shehawken-Rattlesnake Creeks, Lackawaxen River, Wallenpaupack Creek and Upper Lehigh River sub-basins of the Delaware basin. It also includes land within the Great Bend Susquehanna River and Lackawanna River sub-basins of the Susquehanna River region.

The State Water Plan, while it includes no specific recommendations for Wayne County, does identify principles for each planning region, which are intended to suggest actions by both counties and municipalities as well as the Commonwealth itself. These include the following for the Delaware River region:

- Linking land use decisions and water resources management to further require consideration of water resources management, flood control, storm water management and sewage management in land use decisions, infrastructure funding, construction decisions and grant decisions.
- Improving strategy for regional planning and land use coordination and collaboration to consider issues on a regional level while acting upon them at the local level through coordination at the local, state, interstate and federal levels.
- Conduct Integrated Water Resource Planning on a holistic watershed basis.
- Upper/Middle Susquehanna River region principles include:

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- Protecting important headwater habitats and recharge areas by focusing on forested land use practices and potential water resources impacts resulting from natural gas extraction; including promotion of sound land use practices, appropriate zoning of public water supply recharge areas and implementation of water well construction standards.
- Addressing the consequences of acidic drainages on receiving streams to improve and protect water quality and aquatic ecosystems, and to enhance the availability and utilization of water.
- Addressed stormwater in suburban areas with green infrastructure through zoning ordinance changes, subsequently protecting public water supply recharge areas.
- Expand land use planning with county-wide action plans and integrated water resource management while offering education and outreach to water resource stakeholders.
- Upgrade existing aging infrastructure by optimizing use of funding dollars through multi-municipal planning efforts.

The Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin, which covers the bulk of Wayne County, incorporates these principles. It also suggests several land use and other policies consistent with those recommended in this Wayne County Comprehensive Plan and poses a question of whether or not “current growth management plans and zoning are realistic, given water supply availability.” Wayne County has excellent water supplies, both in quantity and in quality. Its population is also low and its growth rate is modest in comparison to national trends. Indeed, that growth rate is currently decelerating. It also has up to date land use regulations that address water supply and related issues in all municipalities. Therefore, the answer to this question is that planning and zoning measures already in place are realistic for all growth that can reasonably be anticipated at this point.

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission Comprehensive Plan offers more detailed recommendations but with much more emphasis on water use and less on land use. Recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan are consistent with that document, which raises no particular issues with the Wayne County portions of its watershed.

Public Input

The community surveys conducted of residents to ascertain views on the needs of Wayne County asked respondents to identify the five most important needs with respect to making Wayne County “a better place to live.” Residents who responded ranked water supplies within the top seven reasons of why they live within Wayne County which is a sharp increase from survey results in 2010, where it was selected by only 2% of all those individuals surveyed as important. Respondents pushed “water supplies” further down the list of importance when asked about issues that need to be addressed to make the County a better place to live. This suggests the idea that current efforts being undertaken are sufficient.

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Overall, it is clear Wayne County residents do not perceive major needs or problems with the existing water supply systems serving the County or the water resources on which they depend.

Recommendations

Wayne County's water supply and utility needs are currently being addressed more than adequately by local officials, private utilities, and municipal authorities. Notwithstanding this, there are some specific items that merit attention over the next several years. These include the following:

1. The County Planning Department and individual municipalities should review and, where necessary, update land use regulations to ensure appropriate hydrogeologic studies or other acceptable evidence of water supplies are provided in the case of large land developments.
2. The County Planning Department should continue to provide technical assistance, when requested, to municipalities, private utilities and municipal authorities in projecting growth and water supply demands.
3. The County Planning Department should monitor the activities of both river basin commissions, the Department of Environmental Protection, and other agencies to ensure a proper balancing of interests in addressing water supply needs. The *Susquehanna River Basin Commission Comprehensive Plan*, which addresses a wide range of needs, including economic demands, provides a good model for achieving such a balance. The County should encourage a similar approach by the Delaware River Basin Commission to ensure the economic development needs of the County are not ignored. This includes a forementioned freeze on natural gas mining within the vast majority of the County.
4. The County should, through Penn State Cooperative Extension and other agencies, attempt to improve public awareness with regard to the need for water conservation and water quality testing.

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Major Watersheds of Wayne County

