

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
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**PROPOSED REGULATIONS RELEASED ON SUSQUEHANNA
BASIN WATER WITHDRAWAL AND USE, PUBLIC HEARINGS SET**
Commission incorporates existing policies, adds new standards, expands compliance

HARRISBURG, Pa. – At its quarterly business meeting on June 14 in Corning, N.Y., the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) proposed comprehensive revisions to its regulations (18 CFR Parts 803, 804 and 805) governing water withdrawal and consumptive use projects. The proposed revisions, which are open for public comment through September 1, incorporate existing SRBC policies and practices, improve the organizational structure of the regulations, add new standards for regulated projects and expand provisions for compliance and hearings.

Included among the proposed changes, SRBC would:

- Require sponsors of consumptive use projects involving ground or surface water withdrawals to request approvals for both the consumptive use and the withdrawal. (Consumptive use is when water is not returned to the Susquehanna basin, including through evaporation, out-of-basin diversions, use in products, etc.)
- Require sponsors of projects withdrawing 100,000 gallons per day or more from any combination of ground and surface water to request approval of the withdrawals.
- End the recognition of “pre-compact” or “grandfathered” consumptive uses or withdrawals upon a change of ownership, and no longer allow the transfer of project approvals when a change of ownership occurs. Exceptions are contained in the definition of the term “change of ownership” for projects involving transfers between family members, transfers of agricultural land for so long as it continues to be used for agricultural purposes, and corporate reorganizations.
- Reduce the duration of consumptive use and withdrawal approvals from 25 years to 15.
- Incorporate standards for interbasin diversions, which are currently effective as policy.
- Provide for an expedited approval process for consumptive use projects that obtain water from public water supplies.
- Establish an administrative appeal procedure for parties aggrieved by an SRBC decision.

SRBC Executive Director Paul Swartz said, “As the demand for water continues to increase for domestic supplies and economic development, the Commission’s goal is to manage and support that growth, while we protect the environment and existing water users at the same time. We believe these proposed regulatory changes will enhance the Commission’s ability to do just that.”

SRBC, which worked closely with its Water Resources Management Advisory Committee to develop the revisions, is seeking public comments.

Swartz said, “While the Commission and its advisory committee gave careful consideration to the impacts of the regulatory revisions, we fully expect to receive and would welcome comments from the regulated community, environmental and conservation interests, planning and economic development agencies and others who deal with the impact-side of our regulations day-in and day-out.”

The proposed regulations are available on SRBC’s web site at www.srbc.net/projreview.htm. Written comments can be submitted on or before September 1, 2006 to Richard Cairo, Secretary, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, 1721 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA, 17102, Phone: (717) 238-0423, ext 306, Fax: (717) 238-2436, E-Mail rcairo@srbc.net.

In conjunction with the public comment period, SRBC has scheduled three public hearings to explain the proposed regulatory changes and to receive public testimony. The hearings will be held on:

- August 8, 6:30 p.m., Owego Treadway Inn & Conference Center, 1100 State Route 17C, Owego, N.Y.
- August 10, 8:30 a.m., Pennsylvania Geological Survey, Middletown Office, 3240 Schoolhouse Road, Middletown, Pa. (near Harrisburg)
- August 10, 6:30 p.m., Kings College, Snyder Room, 133 North River Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Persons planning to present oral testimony at a public hearing should provide prior notice, if possible, to Richard Cairo at (717) 238-0423 ext 306 or by e-mail at rcairo@srbc.net.

SRBC is the governing agency established under a 100-year compact signed on December 24, 1970 by the federal government and the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland to protect and wisely manage the water resources of the Susquehanna River Basin. The Susquehanna River starts in Cooperstown, N.Y., and flows 444 miles to Havre de Grace, Md., where the river meets the Chesapeake Bay.

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