



Regional Water Management
Task Force

Regional Water Collaboration Can Happen



With so many separate municipalities, authorities, private businesses, and regulatory agencies involved in water resource management, building effective regional cooperation sometimes seems impossible. **But it's not.** Beneficial collaborations have succeeded in various parts of Southwestern Pennsylvania and on a much larger scale in other U.S. metropolitan regions.

Successful Local Collaborations

Indiana County Municipal Services Authority (ICMSA)

Many of Indiana County's small towns had water and sewage problems when the county commissioners formed ICMSA in 1973. Since then, the authority has assumed management of or constructed 14 water supply systems and 15 wastewater systems, serving 3,500 customers. The authority has financed \$100 million in capital investments, including facilities that serve several municipalities at once, and uses a "circuit rider" system to efficiently enable operators to maintain more than one facility.

Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County (MAWC)

Formed by the Westmoreland County commissioners in 1942, MAWC is now the largest municipal water authority in Pennsylvania with 125,000 customers. MAWC gradually acquired, integrated, and upgraded more than a dozen smaller systems and built a water storage, treatment, and transmission infrastructure that serves portions of four counties. MAWC now manages more than 2,200 miles of water lines. It began branching into sewage management in 2001 and has consolidated operations, resources, and expertise while acquiring several sewage systems.

McCandless Township Sanitary Authority (MTSA)

Created by the Town of McCandless in 1955, MTSA now serves all or part of seven North Hills communities. Cost-effectiveness was a primary motivation for these consolidations. With a customer base of 52,000, MTSA has maintained an aggressive maintenance program, including development of its own geographic information system and a regular schedule of sewer line inspections by camera. In 2006, the authority also took on management responsibilities for the Girty's Run Sanitary Authority, which serves four municipalities in a nearby North Hills watershed.

See examples of broader regional cooperation on the opposite page.



Regionwide Collaborations

Atlanta, Ga.

Federal consent decrees and severe intraregional conflicts over water consumption caused the Atlanta region to form the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District in 2001. Within four years, with state funding assistance, the district developed comprehensive, watershed-specific, integrated plans for watershed management, wastewater capacity, water supply, and conservation governing 16 counties. It now works collaboratively with local municipalities and counties to implement these provisions.

Cleveland, Ohio

The Cleveland area's once-infamous waters are clean again, thanks in part to regional leadership by the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA). Empowered to guide regional planning, NOACA participates in decisions on sewer service areas and new facility development, so that sewage treatment capacity is used efficiently. It also directs a federally funded initiative to clean up the Cuyahoga River. Ohio's state environmental agency supports NOACA's efforts by not processing permit applications unless they align with the region's clean water plans.

Milwaukee, Wisc.

Flooding problems in the 1960s caused the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) to develop water resource planning expertise. SEWRPC helps municipalities determine when sewage interconnections are cost-effective, directs watershed-based planning to address the region's water supply and water quality needs, and coordinates land-use with water planning in a comprehensive manner. SEWRPC is supported by a regional levy that costs the average household less than \$2 per year.

Benefits of Regional Collaboration

- Economy of scale in staffing, management, operations, equipment, and technical expertise
- Equitable treatment of all communities within a single watershed—downstream communities are not harmed by upstream communities' decisions
- Provision of educational, research, technical, and advocacy services on water-related issues to local jurisdictions
- Elimination of narrow municipal interests
- Planning and development that are consistent with regional environmental and economic development goals
- Effective prioritization of regional projects



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