

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSE TO COMMENT

## DRAFT WATER SUPPLY PLAN COMMENTS

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The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) released the Draft New Jersey Statewide Water Supply Plan (Plan) on May 1, 2017. After the release, the NJDEP conducted four public meetings, where comments were collected. In addition, the NJDEP collected written comments until July 21, 2017. NJDEP collected comments from 116 commenters. NJDEP reviewed all submitted comments and determined whether amendments were warranted and/or feasible at this time. This document is intended to summarize the changes that were incorporated into the final New Jersey Statewide Water Supply Plan (Plan) response to comments. Minor typographical and administrative changes to the final Plan were also made but are not included here.

### DATA, POPULATION, AND DEMAND PROJECTIONS

NJDEP received comments from several individuals expressing concern regarding the age of the underlying data. Many commented that some data (i.e. withdrawals, population and demand projections) was out of date by the time the Plan was released for public comment.

The Plan is intended to be an evolving document and as such, the NJDEP updated the withdrawal data to incorporate final 2014 and 2015 data, which has been verified through a quality assurance/control process. These data are found in the final Plan in Chapter 3 and Appendix A. Similarly, the population projections and estimated demands have been updated to extend the planning horizon through 2040 using the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) projections. Appendix D explains how population estimates and future demands were calculated.

In addition, a discrepancy was noted with regard to the per capita daily use rate used in the draft Plan. The draft Plan used 100 gallons per capita day (gpcd) for potable supply, whereas historical trends showed a declining rate with a value of approximately 125 gpcd in 2015 (Chapter 2, Figure 2.10). Several commenters noted this discrepancy. In response, the per capita daily use rate for potable supply by purveyors was changed to 125 gpcd and this number was used to estimate future potable needs. The rate remains at 80 gpcd for water supplied by domestic wells.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

The NJDEP received comments that the Plan did not address climate change, despite the concern that it is one of many problems that could impact New Jersey's water supply. Chapter 4 of the draft Plan addresses unpredictable weather and the need for resiliency and emergency management. This chapter also discusses the lessons learned from Superstorm Sandy, as well as updated guidance and policies that followed. However, the NJDEP amended the final Plan to incorporate additional information from the NJDEP's Science Advisory Board, Climate and Atmospheric Sciences Standing Committee at Chapter 4. This section explains the possible impacts to New Jersey resulting from climate change as well as general preparedness suggestions for the State.

## **ASSET MANAGEMENT**

Some commenters voiced that the Plan should address asset management in a more robust manner. It was suggested that the Plan include specific actions that the NJDEP will take to promote proper asset management. NJDEP maintains an Asset Management Policy website at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/assetmanagement/> which is intended to promote asset management best practices and provide technical guidance for water and wastewater systems endeavoring to create or amend an asset management plan. This website was an important first step towards communicating the importance of asset management. Subsequently, on July 21, 2017, the Water Quality and Accountability Act was signed into law. This law includes requirements for certain water purveyors with respect to asset management; for instance, the law requires systems to complete valve inspections, regular hydrant flushing, mitigation plans for multiple notices of violations, and the preparation of certified asset management plans. NJDEP will work with partner agencies and stakeholders to implement this Act when it becomes effective. A section describing the Act and its requirements have been added to the final Plan in Chapter 4.

## **ALLOCATION**

Many commenters noted that additional allocations should not be granted in WMA's with limited to no water availability, and stated that unused allocations should be cutback. Therefore, a section was added to Chapter 3 of the final Plan that better describes the existing process. New allocation and modification allocation permit application requests are reviewed and approved or denied on a case-by-case basis. The application process often starts with a pre-application meeting, then is followed up with the submission of a detailed application including a technical report, and then application endures a lengthy review process by the NJDEP. In areas of limited water availability, the Bureau of Water Allocation and Well Permitting (BWAWP) has informed applicant's during the pre-application meeting phase that their proposal is not approvable or has denied permit applications.

In addition, language was added to the final Plan that reiterates that during the renewal application process, BWAWP reviews the permittees/certification holders for compliance and water usage, and reduces allocations that are not warranted.

## **WATER QUALITY**

Commenters noted that the draft Plan did not address water quality. The draft Plan states and the final Plan reiterates that the focus of the Plan is quantity of New Jersey's water supply, not water quality. The Division of Water Supply and Geoscience understands the importance of the connection between water supply and water quality. However, in order to address this concern, the final Plan incorporates a section in Chapter 5 that describes and references the various programs, statutes and regulations within the NJDEP that regulate water quality issues. Brief discussions were also added regarding role of the Division of Water Supply & Geoscience's responsibility of properly regulating public water suppliers, to ensure that they are in compliance and are not violating requirements.

## **WATER CONSERVATION**

There were many comments regarding water conservation, which the NJDEP addressed with additions to Chapter 6 of the final Plan. For example, one comment stated that rain sensors should be mandatory on all irrigation systems. In response, information was added to the final Plan stating that in accordance with N.J.S.A. 52:27D-119 et seq., rain sensors are mandatory on all systems installed after September 8, 2000. Another comment suggested

the promotion of the use of rain barrels. Accordingly, information is provided about the New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors program that started in 2014 and which promotes residential rain barrels. Over 2,000 rain barrels have been built and distributed across the State. While water savings small, there is can be a cumulative affect from such measures and in addition, public awareness that is gained. Another comment suggested that the intended results and current status of water conservation rates be included. Hence, the section on water conservation rates was expanded to provide information regarding the purpose and expectations from water conservation rates based on studies. Finally, the different types of water conservation rates were discussed.

## **WATER LOSS**

Comments were received that questioned the use of the term “unaccounted-for-water,” in the draft Plan, since it is an antiquated term. Even though this term is still referenced in regulation, the language in Chapter 6 of the final Plan was altered to remove the term “unaccounted-for-water,” and instead was replaced with the definition itself, which according to N.J.A.C. 7:19-6.4, is “water loss as a difference between gallons of water billed divided by gallons of water entering the distribution system.” Language was also added that clarified that the definition for “unaccounted-for-water” in the regulation is the same as what is now commonly referred to as non-revenue water.

## **BARNEGAT BAY INTIATIVE**

Comments were received requesting an incorporation of the Barnegat Bay Initiative into the Plan. Therefore, the final Plan includes a summary and status of the Barnegat Bay Initiative in Chapter 5.

## **HACKETTSTOWN RESERVOIR**

Finally, it came to the attention of the NJDEP that the Hackettstown MUA no longer owns the property associated with the Hackettstown Reservoir. Therefore, the final Plan has been updated with this information. The new language states that while the Hackettstown Reservoir may still be used in the future for water supply, the project would be complicated due to the sale of the property to private ownership.

## **CONCLUSION**

NJDEP understands that public input is an essential element for good governance and public policy. Therefore, NJDEP would like to thank all those who took time to attend hearings and submit written comments on the draft Plan. All comments were considered and as possible and applicable amendments were made to produce a better final Plan. The Plan is intended to be an evolving document, and the NJDEP intends to continually update and review new data. To that end, comments not addressed in the final Plan may still be considered again during the next reiteration of the Plan.