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June 6, 2018

Hon. Daryl D. Metcalfe, Chair
State Government Committee
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2012

Sent via email to dmetcalf@pahousegop.com

Hon. Matthew D. Bradford, Democratic Chair
State Government Committee
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2070

Sent via email to RepBradford@pahouse.net

Re: Pennsylvania House State Government Committee Hearing on June 11, 2018

Dear Chairman Metcalfe and Representative Bradford,

I am writing in response to the upcoming hearing on the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) on June 11, 2018, for which you have suggested input from water users in the basin would be helpful. Lehigh County Authority (LCA) is the largest water utility in the Lehigh Valley region supporting a vibrant and diverse economy in the City of Allentown and surrounding areas. LCA provides water and wastewater services to more than 200,000 residents in our region, and our services support numerous large commercial and industrial customers who rely on our ability to provide safe, reliable and affordable services. LCA produces 25 million gallons of drinking water, and treats 31 million gallons of wastewater, every day – all within the Delaware River Basin.

Over the 20 years I have been involved with LCA's operation, the DRBC has played an integral role in ensuring our activities support the broader needs of this large, multi-state watershed, and doing so in a collaborative and helpful manner. Some example include:

- Addressing local concerns about groundwater extraction impacts on sub-basins within the watershed and working with our utility on a groundwater monitoring program to illustrate these impacts.
- Working directly with LCA engineers to understand what wastewater treatment standards would need to be met as we explore options to expand capacity in our growing region, saving us tens of thousands of dollars in additional engineering expenses by providing early, accurate feedback.

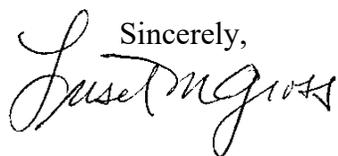
Every drop matters. Every customer counts.

- Collaborating locally on the review of new well permits to support a watershed approach to addressing water resource management.
- Providing drought monitoring information for our watershed, which may at times be impacted differently than other parts of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- DRBC staff participation in local outreach events that support improved public education on watershed protection and conservation efforts.
- Direct communication from DRBC staff about fees, changes in fees, and ways to provide input on fee structures prior to the Commission’s adoption and implementation of changes.

These are just a few examples of LCA’s direct experience working with this dedicated and responsive organization. As a member of the regulated community, we could always say that fewer fees and less oversight would be preferred. However, LCA’s experience with DRBC has been notable in its efficiency and in the value they bring back to our organization, as illustrated in the examples provided above.

As a life-long resident of the Delaware River Basin, I personally have also enjoyed and valued DRBC’s efforts to manage water resources for the benefit of the entire community. Their services in managing flows in the Lehigh and Delaware Rivers from the Beltzville Reservoir and other upstream reservoirs are crucial to maintaining balance within the watershed for all users. This is a silent service that most residents in our region know very little about, but it is clear to me that DRBC’s responsible management of flows supports proper drought management, preservation of sensitive ecosystems, support for our neighbors’ water uses downstream, and management of saltwater intrusion into the Delaware River. An added bonus is that their flow management strategies also support many recreational uses throughout the basin. These are all elements of preserving and enhancing the quality of life, along with ensuring the economic benefits of having sound water resource management, in our region.

I urge the Pennsylvania State House Committee and the Pennsylvania General Assembly to continue to support DRBC’s important work to protect and manage the water resources of the Delaware River Basin.

Sincerely,


Liesel M. Gross
Chief Executive officer

cc: Local PA Legislators