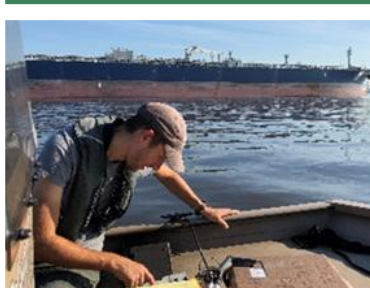
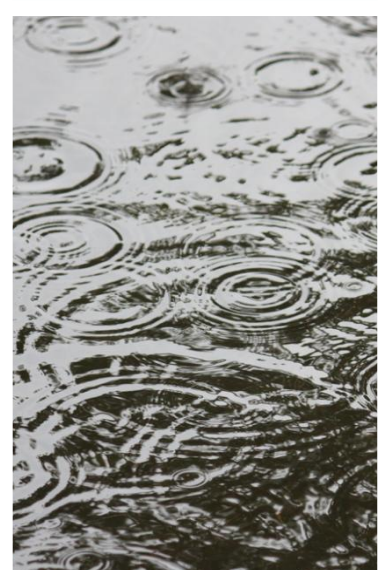


Report on March 19, 2026 Delaware River Tabletop Exercise



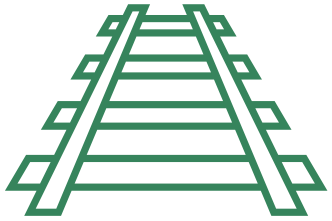
Amanda Khalil
Water Resource Scientist

Subcommittee of Source Water Protection
May 14, 2026



Presented to an advisory subcommittee of the DRBC on May 14, 2026. Contents should not be published or re-posted in whole or in part without permission of the presenter or the DRBC.

Agenda



How did we get to planning and performing a Delaware River Tabletop Exercise?

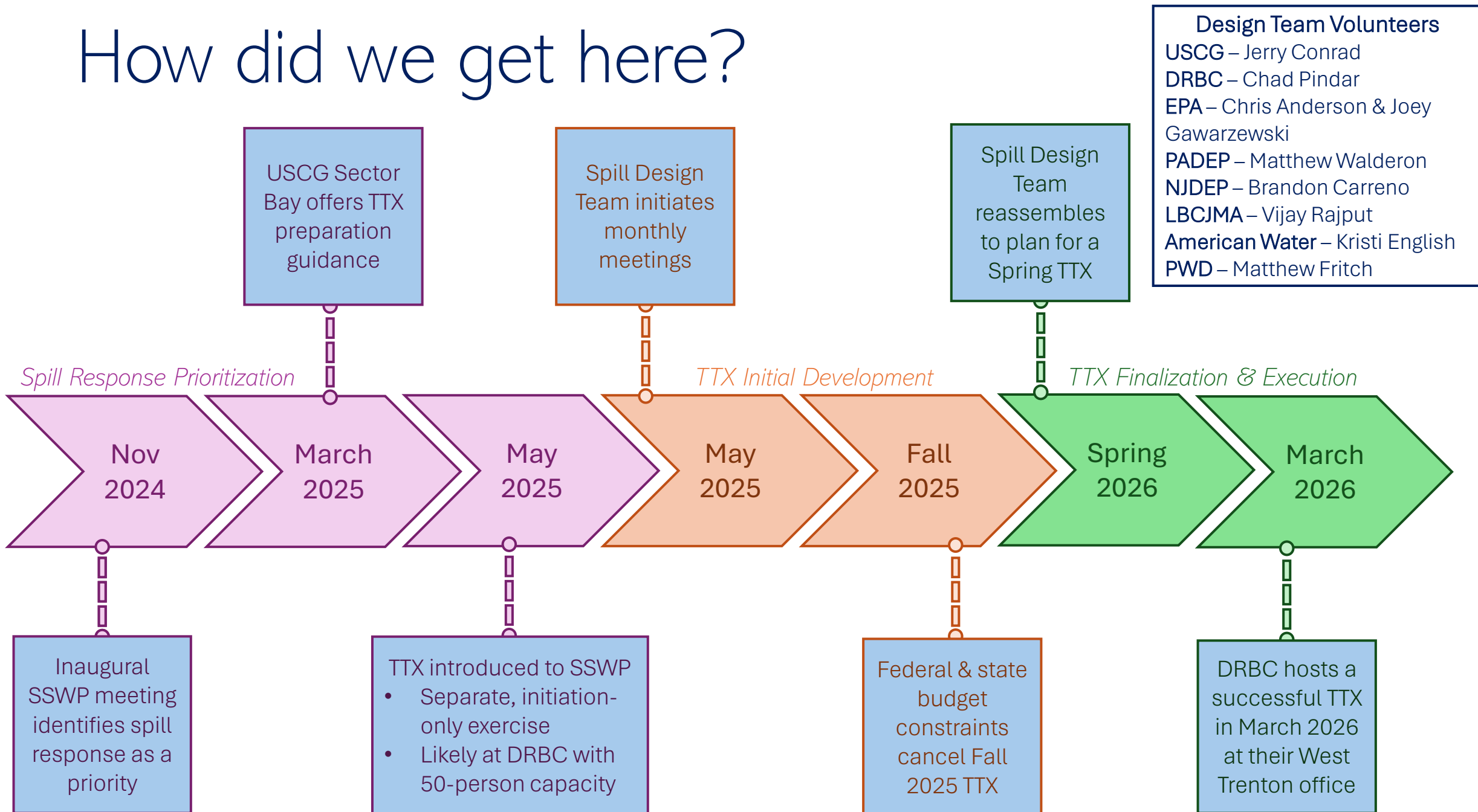


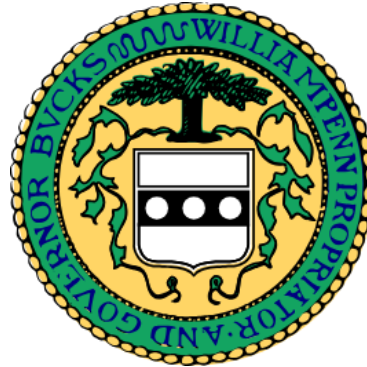
Who, what, where was involved in the planned Tabletop scenario?



What was involved during the 3 Modules?

How did we get here?



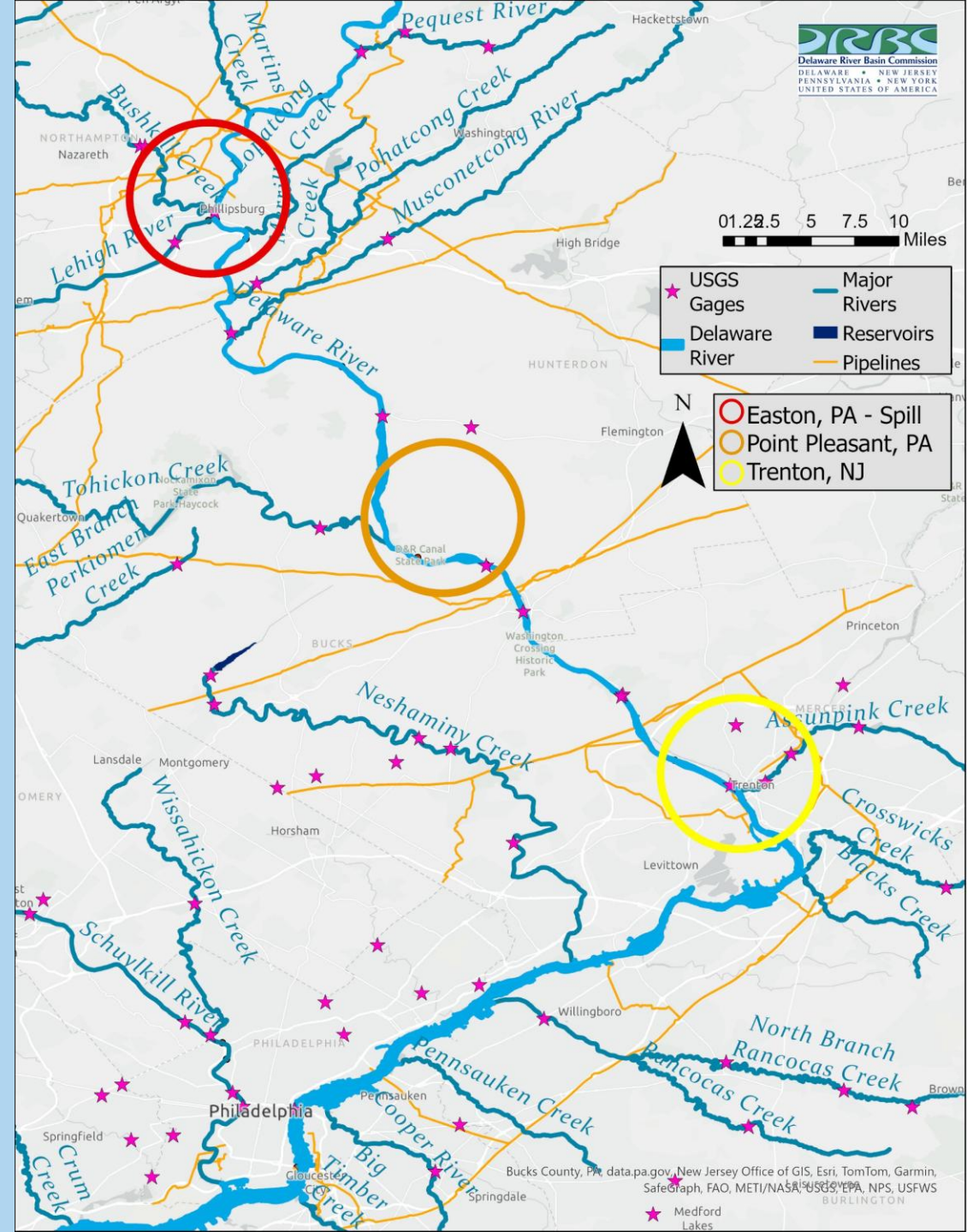


Scenario Overview

- July 4th weekend – overnight spill at 1:53AM
 - FIFA World Cup games at Lincoln Financial Field & MetLife Stadium
 - America 250 events across the region
 - Recreators expected to use the local region for leisure
- 4,000 CFS at Trenton, NJ
 - Low flow conditions
- Spill over the Mainstem between Easton, PA & Phillipsburg, NJ
 - Norfolk Southern's CNJ Bridge
 - Spilled cars in the River, ablaze on the banks, and derailed

Key Area

A spill in the Easton (PA) and Phillipsburg (NJ) area has the potential to impact downstream Public Water Supply intakes.



Easton (PA) – Phillipsburg (NJ)



PA

NJ

https://www.google.com/maps/@40.6886176,-75.2019158,540m/data=!3m1!1e3?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI2MDMxMS4wKXMDSoASAFAw%3D%3D

Google Maps

Locational Context

Looking Downstream

NJ

PA



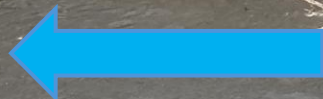
Locational Context

Where the Lehigh meets the Delaware

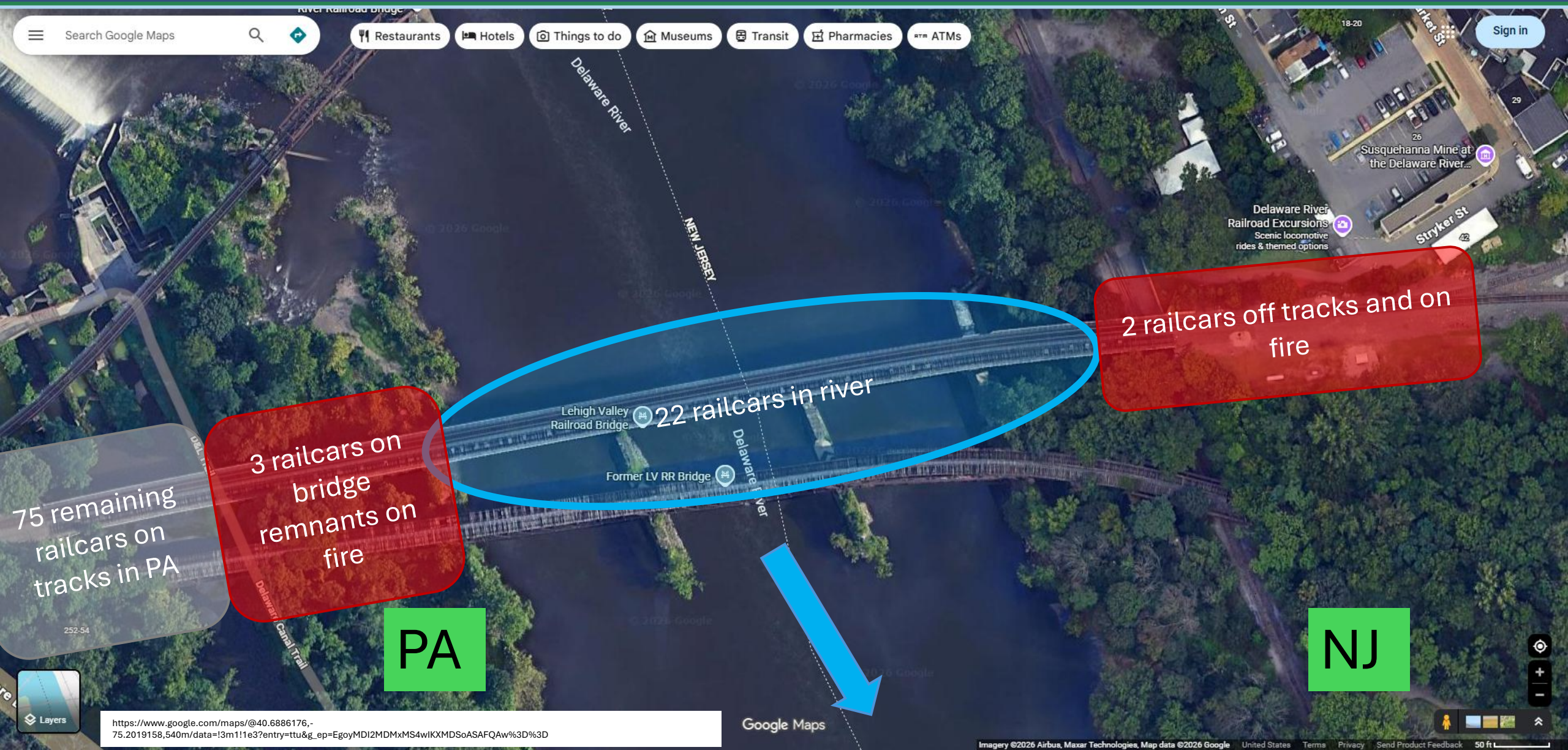
PA

Lehigh River Confluence

Delaware Canal Intake



Easton (PA) – Phillipsburg (NJ)



75 remaining railcars on tracks in PA

3 railcars on bridge remnants on fire

PA

22 railcars in river

2 railcars off tracks and on fire

NJ

Locational Context

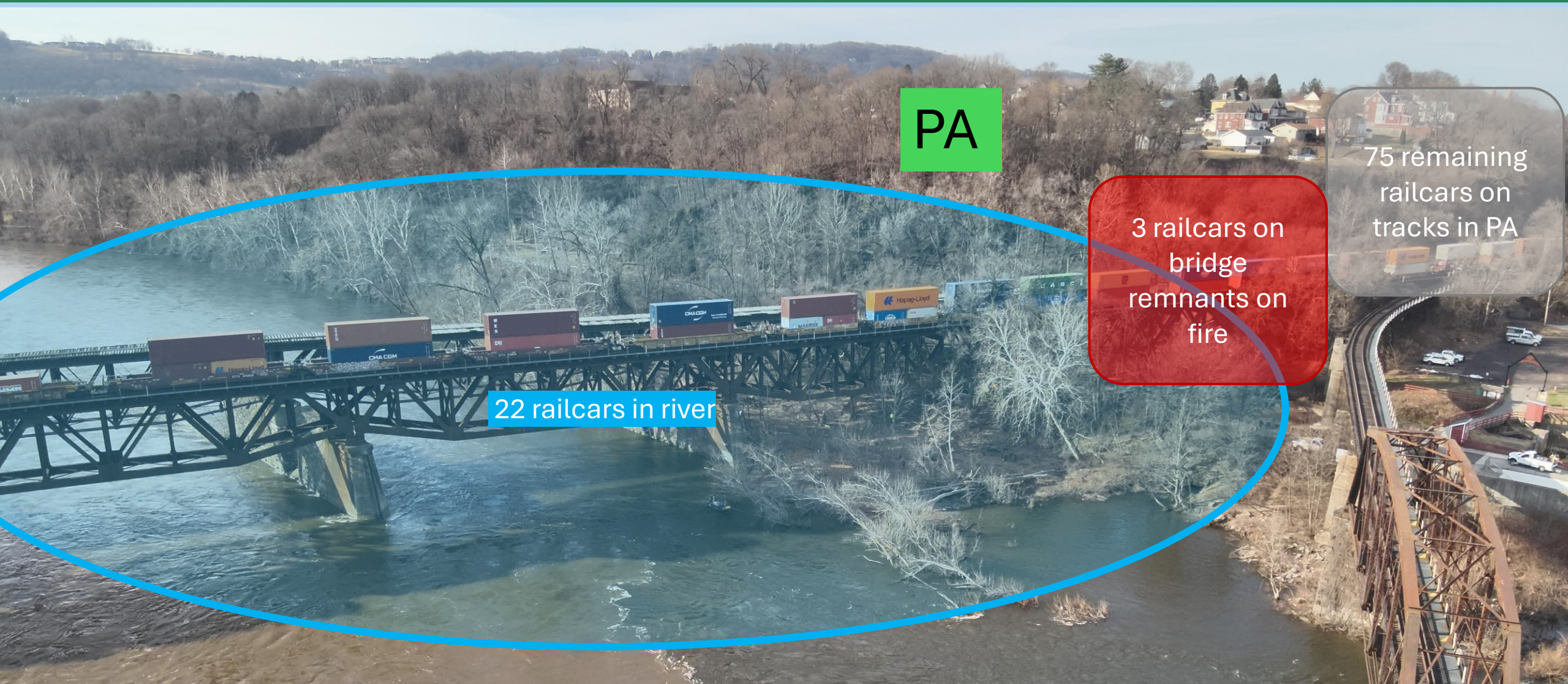
Where the Lehigh meets the Delaware

PA

22 railcars in river

3 railcars on bridge
remnants on fire

75 remaining
railcars on
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Locational Context

Where the Lehigh meets the Delaware

NJ

2 railcars off
tracks and on
fire

22 railcars in river



Module 1: Incident Notification (+4hr)

1:53 AM

- Norfolk Southern's "Central Railroad of New Jersey Bridge" collapsed over the River just South of Easton and Phillipsburg
- A freight train was damaged
 - 22 cars have entered the river
 - 5 cars located on bridge remnants and onshore that are on fire
 - 75 cars remained on rails undamaged

2:30 AM

- First responders attempting to extinguish the burning cars report the use of Aqueous Fire Fighting Foam
 - Run-off from the fire has the potential to reach the river directly
- Federal On-scene Coordinators have arrived to assist

4:45 AM

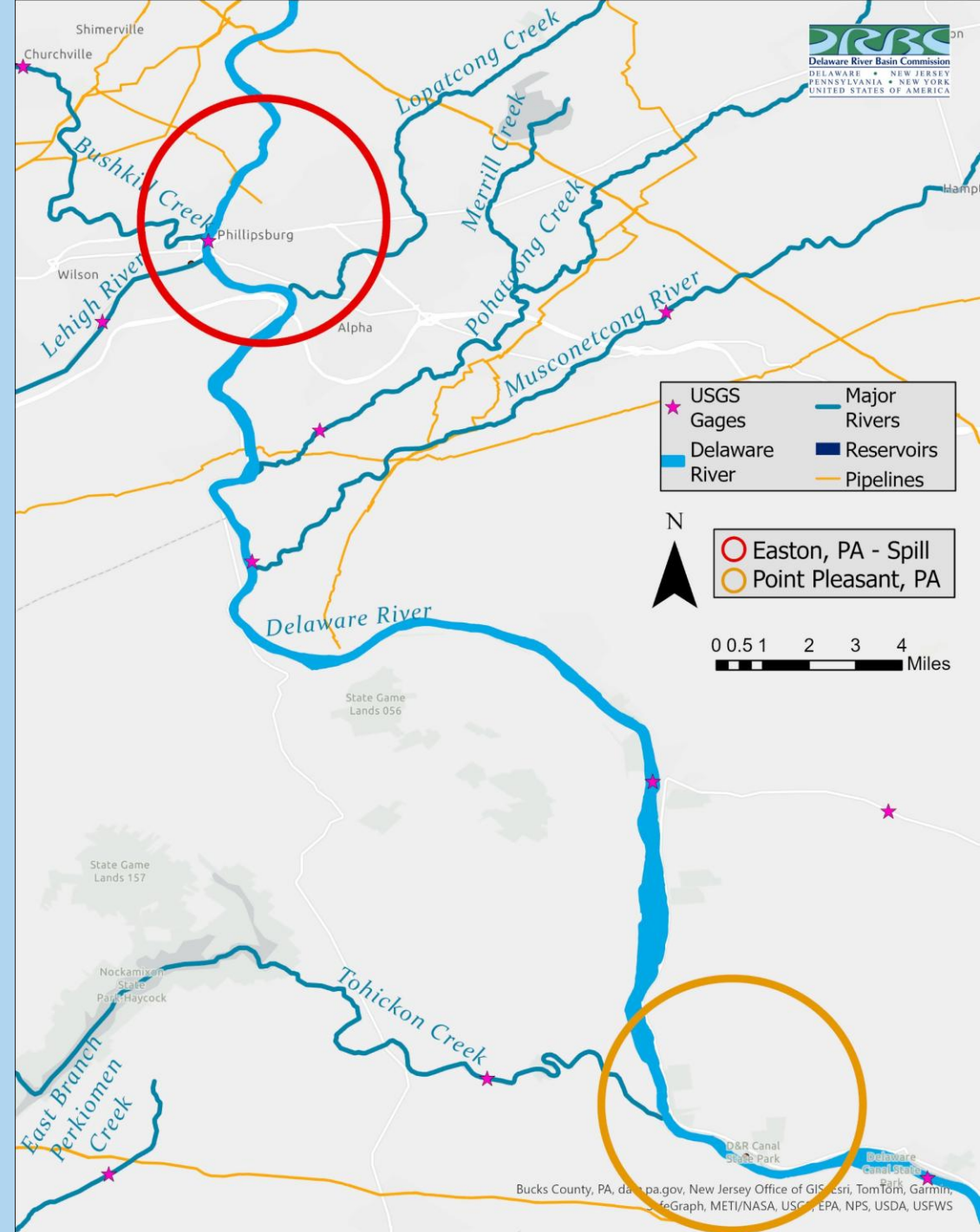
- EPA START contractors begin air monitoring with PADEP & NJDEP
- EPA is also deploying their ERRS contractor to augment containment activities initiated by the railroad's response contractor
- The ignited cars delay emergency response

5:07 AM

- Burning tanker cars have been extinguished
 - ~25 gallons of AFFF was used
- Visible sheen and discoloration are evident
- Evidence of exothermic reaction seen near the damaged rail cars
- Contaminant type and amount released is unclear
- PADEP's EWS entry estimates spill at PPP in 13hr & Trenton in 26hr

Spill to PPP

The EWS models that the spill will reach the first cluster of intakes including the Point Pleasant Pump and D&R Canal in ~13 hours.



~ 13 Hours – Plume nears Point Pleasant, PA & Bulls Island, NJ



Module 2: Operational Coordination (+10hr)

11:53 AM

- Responders confirmed 15 of 22 cars were breached, discharging contaminants.
 - 8 cars of Hydrocarbon Liquids, 4 of Spent Sulfuric Acid & 3 of Resin Solution
- A plume of visible sheen and discoloration extend downstream approximately 19 river miles
- Chemical threats and collapse debris slow the progress of containment
- Local media is onsite reporting on the incident. There is already significant speculation on contaminants type and potential water quality impacts

12:30 PM

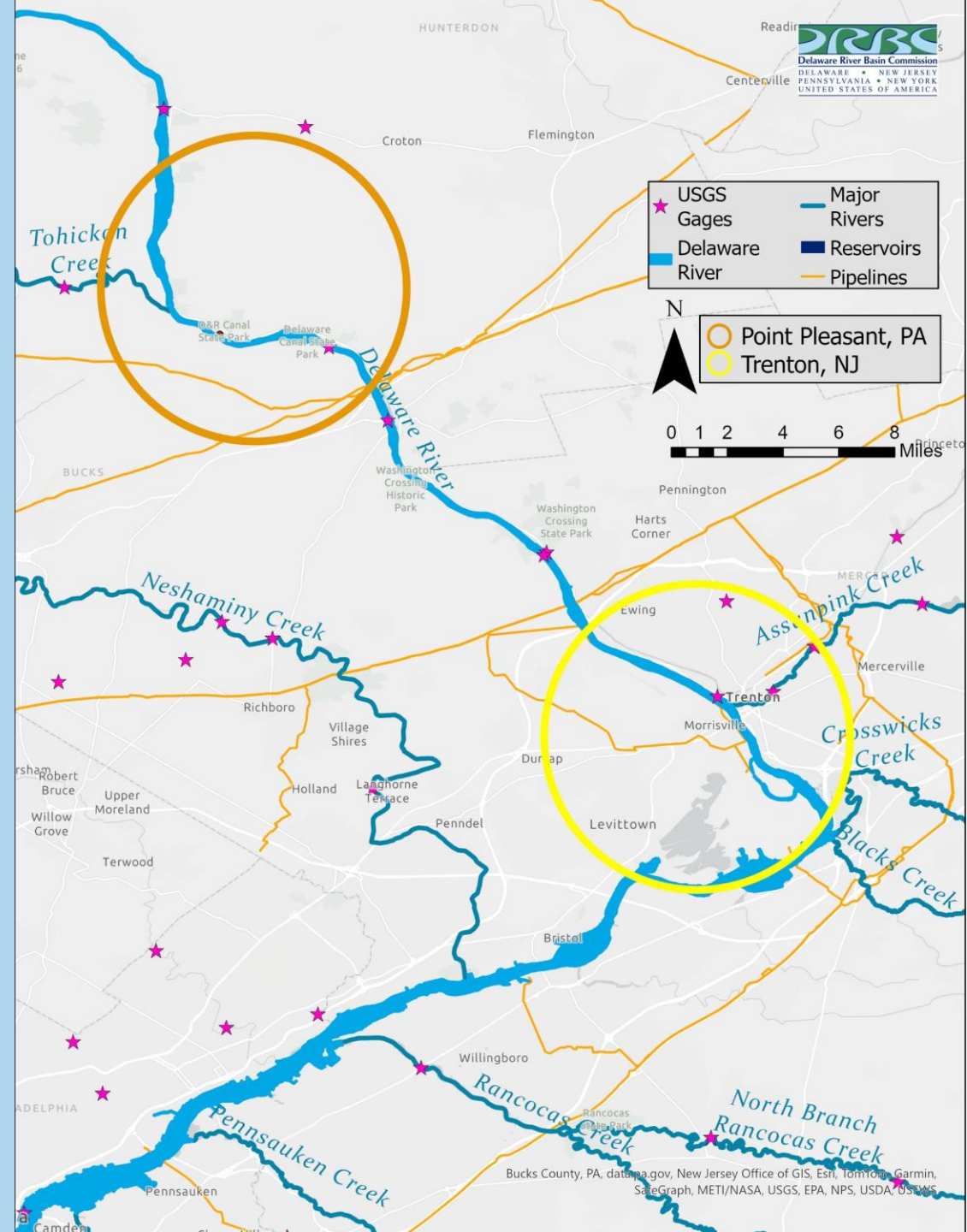
- EPA, NJDEP & PADEP are River sampling
 - Initial results indicate presence of hydrocarbon liquids, acids, polymer resin, and AFFF
 - These results confirm train manifest provided by Norfolk-Southern
 - Contaminants are confirmed as hydrocarbon liquids, spent sulfuric acid & polymer resin from railcars, and AFFF from firefighting activities

13:45 PM

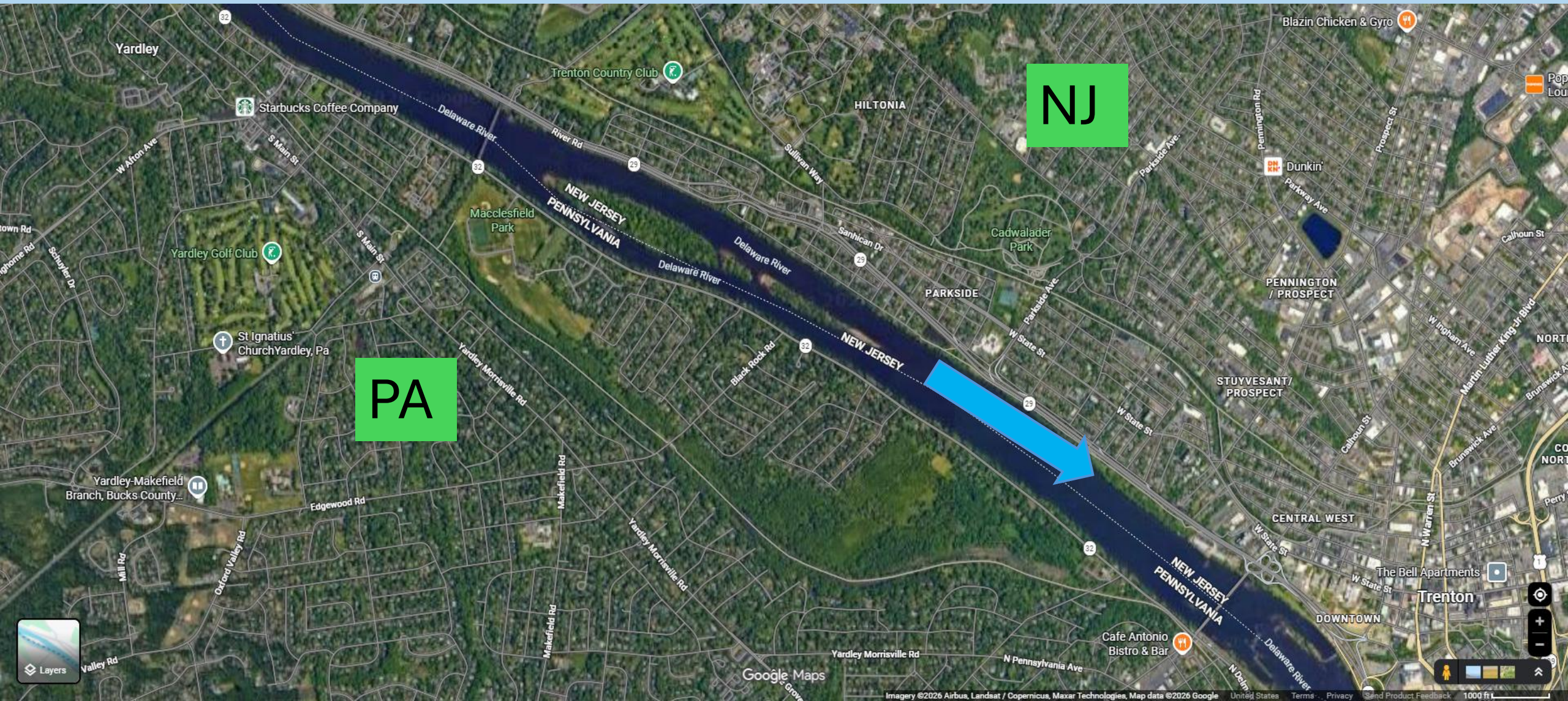
- PWD enters contaminant information and an updated Delaware Valley Early Warning System notification is sent to downstream utilities confirming the types of contaminants present in the river

PPP to Trenton

Downstream of the Pump, there is another cluster of intakes around Trenton, NJ again serving both sides of the River.



~ 26 hours – plume nears Trenton, NJ



Module 3: Utility Impacts (+26hrs)

- The plume has reached public water intakes near Trenton, NJ
- Impacted utilities have closed intakes and are actively implementing their emergency response plans (ERPs)
- Media interest drinking water impacts heightens as several major metropolitan areas are likely to be impacted
- Local retailers report low supplies of bottled water as the public rushes to buy

- Water utilities provided several slightly different notifications to their customers.
 - Slight differences are scrutinized by social and local media
- Private drone pilots map the plume & local volunteer groups collect grab samples from shorelines
- Strong need for unified messaging to properly relay the situation and potential impacts to the public if water service is limited over the next several days

- FEMA, NJOEM & PEMA are looking to their counterparts at NJDEP and PADEP to advise on how to prepare for a possible multi-day disruption to drinking water utilities
- They are looking for specifics on:
 - stockpiling bottled water
 - what provisions may need to be made to sustain operations at local hospitals and critical care facilities

- Philadelphia is hosting several major events as part of the America 250 Celebration & the FIFA World Cup
- Prior to the spill, Philadelphia's OEM was fielding concerns about sufficient river flow to meet any emergency firefighting needs & increased demand for drinking water
 - Concern grew as PWD may close its primary intake on the Delaware River in the coming days

Federal Agency Perspectives

Chris Anderson, EPA R3

State Agency Perspectives

Matthew Walderon, PADEP

Water Utility Perspectives

Kristi English, PAWC

Delaware Valley EWS

Matt Fritch, PWD

Discussion / Questions

Hotwash Items

- Is a functional TTX the next step?
- Modeling and jurisdictional questions were complex
- Diversions, intrabasin transfers, PWS interconnections
- Did not go deep into regional WQ sampling/analytical capacity
- Travel time estimates for main-stem Delaware River
- Need to have modelers on “same page”
- Geographic Response Plan – what is next for Delaware River?
- We are lucky to have the Delaware Valley Early Warning System
- This TTX had too many unknowns
- Did not include PEMA / FEMA / NPS / USFWS / Fire Depts / State Police
- We should have future exercises
- What about air quality impacts?
- Next time mix up groups
- A major spill on the main-stem Del River is a “when, not if”
- Can PWSS turn off “big customers”?
- Can the region withstand not using the main-stem Delaware River for an extended time?
- Swiftwater teams / rescue needs / booming exercise
- A “needs assessment” to help scope future TTX
- Future TTX would cost \$ / facilitator