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***PROFILE on Pennsylvania Source Water Protection Collaboration: The North Central Source Water Protection Alliance (NCSWPA)***

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When a tap is turned on, water comes out. There is usually not a lot of thought to the process of how that water was treated or even where that water originated. What Source Water Protection (SWP) does is focus on the source directly; long before a drop of chemical is added in the treatment process. Once a community water system takes the step to embrace the concept of SWP, it opens the door for many proactive opportunities to protect its precious water resource. It also allows the system to enter into an elite group of forward-thinking water systems that openly grasp the long term benefits of source water protection.

Such a group of community water systems was formed in June of 2010, in Lycoming County, and now includes members in neighboring Sullivan County. This proactive group named itself the **North Central Source Water Protection Alliance** or **NCSWPA** for short. The NCSWPA members are: Armstrong Township, Clinton Township, Hughesville Borough Water Authority, Jersey Shore Area Joint Water Authority, La Porte Borough Municipal Water Company in Sullivan County, Limestone Township Water Authority, Lycoming County Water and Sewer Authority, Montgomery Borough Water Authority, Montoursville Borough Water Authority, Muncy Borough Water Authority, Williamsport Municipal Water Authority, Lycoming County Planning Commission, Lycoming County Conservation District, Eagles Mere, and Millville, along with the Environmental Protection Agency, and PA DEP.

The wheels to form the Alliance were set in motion with a letter from the Lycoming County Planning Commission inviting all community water suppliers in the county to receive information on developing a Source Water Protection plan. During the first meeting, Mark Stephens, P.G., with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, made a presentation on the process and benefits of developing a source water protection plan, along with the support available through DEP's Source Water Protection Technical Assistance Program (SWPTAP). The group decided to have regular meetings three times a year with the vision of growing the Alliance to 30-40 members. The Alliance schedules their meetings to be held in February, June, and October and rotates the location among the members.

The Alliance recently adopted a mission statement, logo, and a cooperative interagency agreement. The mission statement reads:

*“The North Central Source Water Protection Alliance serves to protect the region’s drinking water sources from all Potential Sources of Contamination (PSOCs) by proactively evaluating susceptibility to contamination, working to minimize or eliminate specific potential threats, creating long-range strategies to protect sources, encouraging local planning and inter-municipal coordination efforts, and educating the public about source water protection.”*

There are several different issues of concern to the Alliance, ranging from the SRBC’s water allocation re-permitting procedure, to the safe transportation and treatment of FRAC fluids within the Alliance member watersheds. One recent major accomplishment of the group was the direct result of Alliance input to PENNDOT for a redesign of Route 15 at the top of Bald Eagle Mountain. Route 15 is a major 4-lane transportation corridor in central Pennsylvania between Maryland and New York. The main issue regarding the transportation safety redesign was the potential negative effect to the Montoursville drinking water supply area due to the location of the Route 15 stormwater outfall, and the potential for hazardous materials or toxic fluids discharging from spills into Montoursville’s recharge area. The Alliance was able to voice its concerns and eventually get them addressed with PENNDOT. After several meetings that highlighted the importance of the essential public water supply areas delineated under the DEP’s Source Water Protection Program, and risks from transportation spills, PENNDOT agreed to an improved stormwater management plan for Route 15 traversing Bald Eagle Mountain.

Megan Lehman, Lycoming County Environmental Planner and advisor for the Alliance, is currently developing an educational brochure about the Alliance and the role residents can play in protecting this vital source water resource. When asked why she thought Counties should have Source Water Protection alliances such as the North Central Source Water Protection Alliance, she stated, *“From my perspective I think one of the most important outcomes of the Alliance has been bringing people together who share the same profession and giving them the opportunity to talk, compare notes, share information, and ultimately learn from each other. The tours of each other’s facilities are very helpful so they can see how the operation is managed and executed. Also, I think it builds a sense of community and the reassurance that they are not alone, but have support from others who share their same profession. It builds strength.”*

The North Central Source Water Protection Alliance is a great example of communities driven by the idea of protecting their drinking water source. The Alliance has the force to make a difference within their communities in the two participating counties. It is important to remember that when one stands all alone, they may speak with a whisper, but when many stand together, they speak with a thundering roar.