

Spring Creek Watershed Commission

Phase III Watershed Planning Project

A Proposal for Getting Started

Bill Sharp, March 1, 2022

The objective of the Spring Creek Watershed Commission Phase III Watershed Project is to create a collaborative association to develop an integral watershed management approach to address growth and environmental conditions over the coming decades. The generic term for this framework is a “One Water Plan.”

This begins by forming a work group approved by the Watershed Commission for the purpose of developing a prospectus.

The intent is not to create a regulatory body, the Watershed Commission has no power to do so, but rather an active network of interested parties to share information and seek the most effective and cost-efficient means to develop, preserve and manage our quality water resources in the decades to come.

The Spring Creek watershed is our sole source of water, it all comes from the sky and is stored in a karst geology. We rely on that groundwater and its quality to keep us going.

The Spring Creek watershed consists of twelve municipalities and is the home of Penn State University. There are at least 30 entities that make decisions about land and water in the watershed.

The population of the Spring Creek watershed, including a transient student population, is around 130,000. It was one of the strongest economic centers in the state. The proposed plan would help guide the course of development.

Background

The Spring Creek Watershed Commission (SCWC) was founded in 1996 as a public entity. As a commission it has only advisory power. In 2007, twelve member municipalities passed ordinances to establish the present structure of the SCWC. Those ordinances include Articles of Agreement that clearly set forth the organization, its mission and the terms of membership. It is funded at the rate of 10 cent per person per annum in each watershed, subject to annual approval by each member board of supervisors and Borough Council members. This fund covers basic administrative cost including a contracted, part-time Communication Coordinator.

Mission Statement

1. To establish a Long-Range Vision for the watershed that represents a consensus of thoughts and ideals that are commonly shared by the people of the Spring Creek Watershed

2. To establish a Leadership Role within the watershed to advance and coordinate projects and programs that are consistent with the Long-Range Vision of the Spring Creek Watershed
3. To establish a long-range comprehensive Watershed Management Plan and program of meaningful associated projects to protect and enhance the Quality of Life within the Spring Creek Watershed.

Watershed Planning

During its early years, the SCWC had grant funding for staffing and a variety of activities. Among these was a planned three phase watershed planning process. The first phase of that process was published in 2003 as “Spring Creek Watershed Plan Phase 1 Final Report: Our Challenges and a Direction for the Future.”

A number of other significant projects have been completed by the SCWC, member municipalities and other agencies since its founding. Following an assessment and inventory of activities over its 20 years, and a celebration of those accomplishments, in 2018 a steering committee was established by the SCWC to move forward with the second phase.

A series of public and work group meetings were held. The Phase 2 report was presented to and approved by the SCWC in December 2019: “Spring Creek Watershed Commission Phase 2 Report: Collaborative Framework for Developing a One Water Plan and Leadership.”

Proposed Phase III Workgroup

The proposed workgroup could review the approved Phase 2 report and other immediately relevant documents, identify priorities, identify stakeholders, and develop an initial scope of work. This prospectus would be presented to the Watershed Commission for review, comment and approval. Workgroup membership, based on the interest and expertise during the Phase 2 project could include:

1. Any appointed member of the SCWC who wishes to serve and/or other individuals designated by their municipality.
2. Representative of municipal water and wastewater authorities.
3. Subject matter experts, and the list from last year included representatives from:
 - a. Penn State
 - b. Susquehanna River Basin Commission
 - c. PA Fish and Boat Commission
 - d. US Geological Survey
 - e. Keystone Water Resource Centre
 - f. Centre Region Council of Governments
 - g. Centre County Planning Agency
 - h. Centre County Conservation District
4. Others nominated by interested parties, for example:
 - a. Clearwater Conservancy
 - b. Spring Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited
 - c. Sierra Club Moshannon Group
 - d. Nittany Valley Environmental Coalition

- e. PA Sr. Environmental Corps
- f. Business and industry: CBICC, Nittany Valley Adventure Bureau, Bellefonte-Intervalley Chamber of Commerce, etc.

Recommended documents for initial review could include:

- Phase 2 report
- SCWC bylaws
- SCWC articles of agreement