



## PRESS RELEASE

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# River Alert Information Network (RAIN) Hosts first Annual Conference, “Celebrating and Enhancing Source Water Protection” September 17 in Pittsburgh, PA

River Alert Information Network (RAIN) August 10, 2015 — The River Alert Information Network (RAIN) will host its first annual conference, **“Celebrating and Enhancing Source Water Protection”** on Thursday, September 17, 2015, at the Carnegie Science Center’s Works Theater, 1 Allegheny Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA. The one-day conference will focus on ways to protect drinking water supplies in the Ohio River Basin and efforts already underway to improve emergency response to potential spills or contamination events.

RAIN— a voluntary collaboration of 51 regional water systems, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources and a wide range of public and private stakeholders — is an initiative for monitoring river water contamination to protect the public health of more than two million people living in the Southwestern Pennsylvania and West Virginia sections of the Ohio River Basin. RAIN has implemented a network of monitoring stations that check river water quality and post the data in near real-time on its website, thus alerting decision makers and citizens about the need to take rapid action if, and when, required.

Through its first annual conference, RAIN seeks to inform and engage new partners in its efforts, as well as community leaders, water professionals, conservation groups and members of the public who are interested in a safe and reliable supply of drinking water, public health protection, environmental stewardship and accountability.

Discussing the upcoming conference, Gina Cyprych, RAIN’s Chairperson and Laboratory and Water Quality Manager with the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, stated, *“Water is not just a precious natural resource; it is also a basic need of every living being that cannot be compromised. As incidents and accidents of water contamination and chemical spills occur across our nation, we are reminded of the urgent need to protect drinking water for the families and businesses in our communities.”*

*“Every day, land use decisions and our daily practices affect drinking water supplies positively or negatively. Our sources of drinking water can benefit from modern real-time spill detection and management, improved land-use planning and greater use of pollution prevention practices like green infrastructure and household hazardous waste collection. Since RAIN began in 2009, we have been active at the waterfront. We hope the conference will be an opportunity to engage a wider group of partners to help improve our ‘eyes on the rivers’,”* Cyprych said.

The conference speakers and moderators will include James Good, Executive Director of Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority; John Ashton, Assistant Manager, Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County; Ron Bargiel, Water Quality Manager- Environmental Management and Compliance, Pennsylvania American Water; Gina Cyprych, Chair of RAIN and Laboratory and Water Quality Manager, Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority; Ronald Schwartz, Assistant Regional Director, PADEP Southwest Region Office; Dustin Shull, PADEP Water Program Specialist; Robert Winters, Protective Security Advisor, Pittsburgh District – US Department of Homeland Security; Jan Lauer, District

Manager, Allegheny County Conservation District; Kevin Gurchak, Manager of Environmental Compliance, Allegheny County Airport Authority and incoming Chair of Three Rivers Pollution Response Council; and Stanley States, Ph.D.

Conference sessions will cover pertinent topics such as ‘measuring what matters’, a vision for safe drinking water in the Ohio Basin; the RAIN Early Warning Network - a source water protection tool of choice; perspective from the PA Department of Environmental Protection; continuous in-stream monitoring trends; opportunities for partnership with RAIN; building regional resiliency through safe drinking water; and water quality tools that boost drinking water protection such as green infrastructure and household hazardous waste collection. There will also be an expert panel discussion moderated by Stanley States, Ph.D., on the role of hydrometrics in determining the ‘well-being’ of water.

RAIN welcomes anyone and everyone who cares about source water purity, protection and public health to this first annual conference. This is a not-to-be-missed event for local, municipal, county and state officials, conservation districts, public health organizations, land conservancies and forest stewards, educators, consultants and water technical assistance providers, water and wastewater personnel, engineers, solicitors and water regulatory staff.

In addition to the RAIN Network, the conference is presented with support from the PA DEP, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority and Penn’s Corner Conservancy Charitable Trust, Inc.

The conference registration fee is \$20, and will cover the conference, coffee and continental breakfast, lunch, and complimentary admission to the Carnegie Science Center’s H2O exhibit on the day of the conference. A discounted parking fee of \$5 per vehicle at the Carnegie Science Center will be payable separately at the conference. Online registration and information is available at [www.rainmatters.org](http://www.rainmatters.org). Space is limited and early registration is encouraged.

For more information and details, interested parties can contact Julie Kollar at [jkollar300@gmail.com](mailto:jkollar300@gmail.com) or 267-468-0555, or Sherene Hess, RAIN Project Coordinator at [Sherene.Hess@RAINmatters.org](mailto:Sherene.Hess@RAINmatters.org) or 724-762-4162.

Conference Contact Hours have been approved by PADEP through PA Rural Water Association: Certified Water and Waste Water Operators will be eligible for 1 CCH for morning session & 1 CCH for the afternoon session.

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## **ABOUT RAIN**

**The River Alert Information Network (RAIN) is a regional source water protection program in southwest Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia. The 51 public water supplier member organizations are dedicated to protecting shared drinking water resources used by community water systems that draw their drinking water from six rivers: the Allegheny, Monongahela, Youghiogheny, Shenango, Beaver and Ohio rivers. RAIN’s mission is to serve the public by creating an Early Warning System (EWS) in the Ohio River Basin to address public health issues, watershed protection and environmental accountability. For more about RAIN, visit our website at [www.rainmatters.org](http://www.rainmatters.org)**

## **What is Source Water Protection?**

Source water protection is part of the multi-barrier approach that is essential for providing a safe and reliable supply of drinking water. Effective source water protection programs reduce contamination threats to sustain available source water quality, balance the need for costly advanced water treatment technology, and demonstrate environmental stewardship.