



RAIN MATTERS

News and Views for RAIN Members

A Quarterly Newsletter

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RAIN Matters is published quarterly for member organizations.

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Find out more about RAIN at our website, www.rainmatters.org

PARTNERING PAYS OFF FOR SOURCE WATER PROTECTION PLANS

On June 10 and 11, RAIN celebrated two exceptional accomplishments: the completion and approval by PADEP of two regional Source Water Protection Plans. With a hearty *Congratulations* during recognition ceremonies, RAIN, PA DEP, and Penn's Corner Conservancy acknowledged the hard work and partnership efforts of 10 water systems, five from the Lower Allegheny and five from Lower Monongahela. The leaders of these systems, which cover 185,000 individuals, or approximately 1% of Pennsylvania's population, are part of a network of dedicated people committed to protecting the drinking water in the region. They have made a conscious decision to further strengthen their promise to their customers by taking steps *now* to protect public health, reduce treatment costs and enhance the quality of life in the community. Good planning means water systems can set in place safeguards to preserve this valuable resource for future generations.

A SWP Plan that delineates high priority areas, identifies potential sources of contamination and develops practical approaches to protecting drinking water from the ground up is like an insurance policy to protect the community's water from a catastrophic loss. Raising local community awareness of drinking water contamination risks and providing information about how individuals, businesses, industry, and other stakeholders can help protect their drinking water sources is a

large part of RAIN's mission. We are pleased and proud to work alongside the water professionals in these partnerships to help support the systems that are part of the RAIN network. RAIN hopes to expand its work with many more systems in western PA that know the value of a clean and reliable supply of water and want to be proactive, rather than reactive, when it comes to this precious resource.



Members of the Lower Allegheny Regional Partnership celebrate approval of their Source Water Protection plan, along with RAIN Project Coordinator Sherene Hess, left, and Chair Gina Cyprych, second from right.

A special thank you to PADEP's Tom McCaffrey and Lyn O'Hare of contractor SSM Group for their technical assistance on the Plan development; and to the Program Managers at PADEP, David Mittner and Alan Eichler, from the Central Office and Southwest PA Region offices respectively, for their leadership in supporting these initiatives. *See more photos on page 4.*



View of the Washington Township Municipal Authority's plant intake on the bank of the Monongahela River.



Joe Alvarez, center, with Sherene Hess and DEP's David Mittner.



Hach SC 1000 monitors the water for RAIN at the Washington Township Municipal Authority plant.

Member Spotlight: Washington Township Municipal Authority's Joe Alvarez Jumps in Early to Help Lay Groundwork for RAIN

Joe Alvarez doesn't just talk the talk. He's walked the walk – literally. As part of a group of early RAIN volunteers, Alvarez worked to help install monitoring equipment along a more than 400 mile stretch of waterways in four river basins to help give the River Alert Information Network its start. But he is quick to say that he didn't accomplish the task alone. Alvarez, who is plant manager for the [Washington Township Municipal Authority](#) (WTMA) in Fayette County, also credits a core group of RAIN members who worked together to install the equipment along the waterways now being monitored in the RAIN watershed basins.

"There was a great group of people who all cared to get this thing going, starting in 2009. We also went into West Virginia to get monitoring set up at 10 sites, though there are still some to get up and running," he said, adding, *"We cover a lot of territory with monitoring equipment. We didn't have the money to pay a subcontractor to install the equipment, so we depended on RAIN members to do it."*

Alvarez, along with RAIN Chair Gina Cyprych, Tom McCaffrey of the Department of Environmental Protection's South West Regional Office and Mark Stoner, water quality supervisor for the Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County, visited sites including water plants at strategic locations along the rivers, to check out the optimum place to install the equipment to properly monitor the river water.

"We were the grass roots effort to get things rolling," said Alvarez, crediting former RAIN board member Charles Barno, Jack Ashton (Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County); and Ron Bargiel (PA American Water) as members of that core group. Alvarez was recruited by Barno in 2008, just as RAIN was being organized.

The goal, Alvarez said, was to find water plants with ideal locations, preferably those situated close to the rivers, to house the monitoring equipment. Water plants were chosen, he said, because they included the key elements needed to run the equipment: a power source, a water supply, a climate-controlled environment and a communications base - an internet connection to transmit the data collected. Thanks to the group's hard work, 25 monitoring stations are now in place in water plants along rivers in the Allegheny, Monongahela, Beaver and Ohio River basins.

Like many others, Alvarez says alarm notification is a key reason why he and the WTMA are RAIN members.

"An absolute benefit is email alarms and text messaging alarms. Being able to know what's happening upstream from our intake, so I can have an employee come in and shut down the plant if need be is valuable, very valuable," he said.

Alvarez believes so strongly in the alert system that the WTMA plant serves as one of the sites that monitors the water for RAIN; equipment was installed there in early 2009.

"WTMA provides internet connection and electricity to work the monitoring equipment; there's a lot of benefit to helping out RAIN, besides just participating," he said. Raw water being brought into the WTMA plant is sampled daily; with monitoring equipment in place in the plant, RAIN equipment samples the same water as his plant samples 24/7; information is then sent to a server which uploads the data in real time. That data is available through the RAIN website, www.rainmatters.org.

Now, as a member of the RAIN board, Alvarez says the focus continues to be on monitoring and ways to increase the number of monitoring stations along the river.

"I feel it's important to collect all the data that we can, and fill in the gaps in between. A lot of tributaries and small streams spill into the Monongahela River. The more monitors, the more you can fill in the gaps to pinpoint more accurately a specific location where there could be a problem," Alvarez said.

All of this data collection enhances the work being done by water systems that have joined together to form regional source water protection partnerships. The WTMA is part of the five-member Lower Monongahela Partnership that was recently recognized by DEP for approval of its SWP plan. As RAIN continues to support development of regional partnerships, Joe Alvarez emphasizes the importance of these joint collaborations.

"It's made it a lot easier developing these SWP plans having five water authorities talk to each other, meet as a group, identify possible water contamination issues, and work together, it makes good sense," he said, adding, *"I'm proud to be a part of it."*

More insights from Joe are in the full-length version at www.rainmatters.org

RAIN Drops - News notes and Upcoming Events for RAIN members

Celebrate Source Water Protection Conference

Plan to join us on **September 18, 2015** for a one-day conference of *"Celebrating and Enhancing Source Water Protection."* Sponsored by RAIN, the event will focus on early warning spill detection and source water protection in western PA and northern West Virginia. Sessions will cover practical, collaborative and cost-saving steps to protect drinking water, now and for future generations. The conference is open to RAIN member water systems, utilities, municipal and other local officials, county and municipal planners, watershed protection organizations, engineers, industry and large river water users and citizens. Watch your email and the RAIN website for details and registration information.



Assessing Infrastructure, Building Resistance: Homeland Security is a Resource for Water Systems

RAIN members heard a presentation in June about a resource program developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through its Office of Infrastructure Protection, designed to provide security to critical infrastructure facilities and industries, including drinking water and wastewater treatment systems. Known as Protective Security Advisors, the program places experienced security specialists in local communities to provide support and resources to water suppliers including audits for safety and security; preparing emergency response plans; or anything related to preparing for the 'what if.'

The program was outlined at the June 10-11 meetings during which RAIN's regional source water protection plan partnerships were recognized for completion and approval of their SWP plans. The overview was presented by Robert E. Winters, CPP, Protective Security Advisor for the Pittsburgh District of the DHS. Winters described the services provided by the Advisors, including assisting in and supporting comprehensive risk and physical/technical security analyses; providing guidance on established security practices; communicating requests for federal protection training and exercises; and providing local context and expertise to DHS to ensure that community resources are used appropriately, efficiently, and effectively.

RAIN will continue to promote the resources that DHS can provide to drinking water utilities for emergency preparedness, including participating in the Region 13 Task Force <http://www.pa-region13.org>. Facilitating Drinking Water Utility Security training in the region will be a priority for RAIN in 2015-2016. More information about this program is available at www.dhs.gov/criticalinfrastructure

Water Systems: Is the Source Water Protection Technical Assistance Program (SWPTAP) for You?

Developing a Source Water Protection Plan is a great investment in your community and offers many benefits, including providing effective tools for public health protection, water supply security and managing operational and capital costs through improved or maintained source water quality. But it is expensive to inventory potential sources of contamination and develop source water protection strategies. What can a water system do? RAIN can help by coordinating a regional partnership effort using Source Water Protection Technical Assistance Program (SWPTAP) resources from the State, ensuring a completed Plan with no out-of-pocket cost to the water system.



As a regional source water protection partnership, RAIN already provides its members with several tools to protect source water, detailed at www.rainmatters.org. Developing a SWP Plan uses these tools and explores ways to apply SWP at the local level. To find out how your water system can be part of a SWP Plan development, contact RAIN Project Coordinator Sherene Hess at 724-762-4162 or PADEP SWP coordinator Tom McCaffrey at 412-442-4212. For information on the program, including the services provided, check out the SWPTAP Fact sheet at www.sourcewaterpa.org, click on 'The Basics' tab, then select 'SWPTAP.'

Committee Corner

From the RAIN Data Communications Committee

After a long period of leasing, RAIN has recently purchased four Virtualization Secure Tunneling Bridges, also known as data communication boxes, from Welbeck Secure Solutions. These four units are located at the Hayes Mine, Pittsburgh, Indian Creek, and Dunkard intakes. Along with their associated data acquisition and delivery software, the data communications boxes allow for full-touch remote monitoring and management and sends the data to RAIN's website rainmatters.org. The Welbeck technology, along with that of Sensevere Solutions, (RAIN owns one unit at the Oakmont intake) eliminates the need for laptops at remote sites, including the expense of rebooting and other maintenance. This latest acquisition further demonstrates RAIN's commitment to a strong and effective early warning detection system for its members. *-Mark Stoner, Data Committee Chair*

Source Water Protection Committee

With the completion of the Lower Monongahela and Lower Allegheny Regional SWP Plans and their approval by PA DEP earlier this year, RAIN now looks to develop a Regional Source Water Protection (SWP) Plan for five water systems within the Ohio-Beaver Basin. The proposed, but not confirmed, systems include: West View, Robinson Township, Center Township, Midland Borough and Beaver Falls. A SWP Plan for this new Regional Partnership project would mean all PA surface water systems on the Ohio River, up the Allegheny River to Freeport and up the Monongahela River to Tri-County, would be covered by SWP Plans. Coordinating regional partnerships such as these requires stepped-up communications, but it is a meaningful investment in our region's quality of life and public health. RAIN will continue efforts to develop Regional Partnership SWP Plans on the Allegheny, Monongahela and Shenango Rivers in 2016-17. *-Tom McCaffrey, SWP Protection Committee*

Photos from the June 10-11 SWP Plan Presentations, courtesy of Tom McCaffrey, PADEP. RAIN members pictured at right are: 1) Laura Blood, Sanitarian, DEP Bureau of Safe Drinking Water, Southwest Region, accepting on behalf of Belle Vernon Borough Municipal Authority; 2) Ed Golanka, I, General Manager, and Mark Rothrock, r, Authority of the Borough of Charleroi; 3) Chuck Craig, General Manager, Harrison Township Water Authority; 4) Josephine Posti, External Affairs Specialist, PA American Water/Brownsville; 5) Harold Cushman, Manager, Newell Water Authority; 6) Denny Kreider, Lead Operator, Oakmont Borough Municipal Authority; 7) Nicholas Colledge, Lead Operator, Brackenridge Borough Water Authority; 8) James Matta, I, Supt., and Edward Pavidonis, c, Plant Supt., Municipal Authority of New Kensington; 9) William Rossey, Borough Manager, Tarentum Borough Municipal Water Works.

RAIN partners celebrated recognition of their Source Water Protection Plans during meetings on June 10-11. Certificates of Approval were presented by David Mittner, Program Manager for the DEP's Bureau of Safe Drinking Water. Below are scenes from those events:



Lower Monongahela Regional Partnership:
Belle Vernon
Brownsville/PA American Water
Charleroi
Newell
Washington Township

Lower Allegheny Regional Partnership:
Brackenridge
Harrison Township
New Kensington
Oakmont
Tarentum

RAIN Board & Partners:

- Gina Cyprych, Chair, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority
- Ron Bargiel, Pennsylvania American Water
- Jack Ashton, Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County
- Joe Alvarez, Washington Township Water Authority
- Nick Colledge, Brackenridge Water Authority

- Tom McCaffrey, RAIN Agency Partner, PA DEP Source Water Protection Section
- Gary Stokum, Treasurer, Penn's Corner Conservancy Charitable Trust
- Craig Cobb, William Toomey, RAIN Partner, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services
- Sherene Hess, RAIN Project Coordinator

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