

Executive Summary -One Water for Integrated Management of Water Resources

The full report can be reviewed at www.springcreekwatershedcommission.org

In early 2018 the Spring Creek Watershed Commission embarked on updating the Spring Creek Watershed Plan. Phase 1 of the Spring Creek Watershed Management Plan entitled “Our Challenges and a Direction for the Future” was completed in 2003 and primarily focused on environmental challenges and solutions. Phase 2 addresses a new way to address watershed challenges. These challenges can encompass many different aspects from environmental, socio economic, watershed scale, utility management, land use, political, population growth and climate change factors.

According to the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, groundwater resources may be approaching or exceeding the sustainable limit of the resource. Spring Creek has an abundance of water but it is unevenly dispersed throughout the watershed causing loss of flow in headwater areas and low to no flow in some tributaries. State College area is undergoing rapid growth and the nature of the growth has changed from residential and industrial to dominantly residential, educational, and commercial, with a more diverse employment base. On average the population in the watershed has increased by 6.5% between 2010 and 2017 with a population reaching almost 131,000. From a management perspective, there are many players (as many as 31 different entities including municipal and county governments, planning commissions, and water and sewage authorities as well as state and federal management agencies) making decisions about land use and water.

Phase 2 takes a proactive approach to solving the fragmented management of Spring Creek’s water resources. The method, known as “One Water” manages water resources for long-term resilience and reliability to meet both community and ecosystem needs. The One Water approach views all water—drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, grey water, watersheds and more—as resources that must be managed holistically and sustainably. Doing so builds strong economies, vibrant communities, and healthy environments.

Governance, regulations, finance, culture, and industry knowledge/capacity are often cited as barriers to achieving integrated water management. In addition, findings indicate that lack of a common vision, political will, urgency, systems thinking, and lack of ability to collect and share data between and among entities are underlying causes that can stagnate an integrated management approach. The One Water approach relies heavily on partnerships and inclusion, recognizing that progress will only be made when all stakeholders have a seat at the table. A diverse workgroup was established to develop guiding principles, goals, objectives, and metrics for outcome-based solutions.

Phase 2 builds the framework for One Water by establishing goals leading to Phase 3 which will document the road map with specific actions and milestones to achieve outcomes over a time period ranging from short term to long term efforts. The three goals are as follows:

Goals 1: Protect, Enhance and Sustain Healthy and Resilient Coldwater Stream Ecosystems.

Goal 2: Maintain and improve water quality and quantity to sustainably meet the needs of the human community.

Goal 3: Integrate and Coordinate Management for Sustainability, Economic Growth, Recreation and Quality of Life.

Pending approval by the Spring Creek Watershed Commission, next steps leading to Phase 3 include: continue to convene the workgroup to begin drafting an RFP for technical services and a funding strategy for Phase 3. Implement a speaker’s educational series; use the SCWC website as a centralized information center and continue using the communications contractor for administrative support