

# **Executive Summary: The Spring Creek Watershed Plan Phase 1 Final Report: Our Challenges and A Direction for the Future**

The Spring Creek Watershed Plan was a project of the Spring Creek Watershed Commission. It was funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, facilitated by ClearWater Conservancy and supported by the Centre County Commission. It was compiled by two full-time ClearWater watershed staff and a Project Management Team. It was completed in 2003.

The list of major stakeholders involved included: ClearWater Conservancy, the Centre County Planning Office, the Centre Regional Planning Agency, University Area Joint Authority, the State College Borough Water Authority, the fourteen individual municipalities, the Spring Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Centre County Conservation District, The Pennsylvania State University, and others

The stated objective of this phase of the Watershed Plan was “to distill numerous existing plans, research, and data into a clear and concise statement of the challenges facing the watershed and recommend ways that its citizens can meet these challenge in the future.”

The Project Team chose a focused approach resulting in a Challenge - Solution Matrix and supporting narrative. The Matrix sought to identify water resource challenges, potential solutions and in separate columns:

- Solutions already studied, with referenced publications listed in appendices.
- Solution needs to be further developed.
- Opportunity to solve past problems.
- Opportunity to solve future problems.

The four major components of the Matrix include:

- Surface water with two main sections: Natural drainages and engineered drainages. Engineered drainage is tied directly to increasing developing and rising population.
- Groundwater also has two components: Recharge and discharge related to a karst environment.
- Water supply: Understanding the implications maintaining clean and plentiful drinking water and the challenges of wastewater treatment. Beneficial Reuse was highlighted as a concept that links treatment and consumption by recharging the aquifer.
- Land Use decisions effect the potential quality of our water resources. There are also existing issues from past decisions that need to be addressed.

The Phase I report includes a narrative section for each of these four major components. Each section presented a number of challenges and potential solutions.

Water Resource Monitoring Project (WRMP): Since 1998 the Spring Creek Watershed Community has been monitoring the Spring Creek watershed according to a protocol designed by a committee of local water resource experts. This effort continues to the present day. The WRMP has been a mainstay for the greater Watershed Community<sup>1</sup>.

A Look to the Future: Authorization of an effective implementing agency and ensuring sustainable funding will be instrumental in addressing the watershed’s challenges and ensuring the protection of all the interrelated components of our water resource system.

There are four appendices:

- A. Spring Creek Watershed Plans and Studies (17 listed to date of report).

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<sup>1</sup> By “Watershed Community” I refer to not only the Watershed Commission and Association and ClearWater Conservancy but also to all entities that have an active interest in managing Spring Creek water resources.

- B. Watershed Plans and Integrated Water Resource Plans from other Watershed (22 items). A location map is provided for plans located in Pennsylvania.
- C. Watershed Related Studies and Resources (16 items)
- D. USGS Conceptual Model Report (Page blank: To be attached as a separate document).

In summary, the Project Team reported that the Phase I study was an important learning experience that “led to a change in overall watershed planning philosophy and the methods that the community will employ to carry out the next steps of the Spring Creek Watershed Planning and Implementation process.” This was the Matrix.

A vision for continuing the planning and implantation process was outlined (for 2004). The Project team recommended:

1. Project Selection: The Spring Creek Watershed Commission to prioritize and select the projects to advance to completion as Phase 2 of the Watershed Plan<sup>2</sup>.
2. Implementation: May require additional research, planning, communication, development of tools or processes, identification of funding source and project partner, and most critically, the project’s implementation in the watershed.
3. Communication: Proposed that the Spring Creek Watershed Community (now SCW Association) be made “the vehicle to facilitate communication of watershed issues and coordinate watershed-based projects. It noted that there was currently staffing located at ClearWater Conservancy. It also noted that members of the SCW Community were already exploring more efficient and effective ways to reach out to watershed stakeholders, evolving from the current *Springs & Sinks* publication and the website.

Two additional phases were planned:

Phase II: Watershed Plan Development (January 2004 – June 2005)

Phase III: Watershed Plan Implementation (Beyond 2005)

## **Closing Notes:**

DEP discontinued funding for the project. Administrative support for the Watershed Community declined after 2003. The last issue of *Spring & Sinks* was published November 2003 and discontinued due to lack of funding. The WRMP has continued to maintain files of documentation related to the watershed but there has been relatively less reporting of this activity.

The Watershed Plan represented the culmination of nearly eight years work by committed stakeholders in the Spring Creek Watershed Community under the leadership of the Spring Creek Watershed Commission. Since then there has been a remarkable amount accomplished by major stakeholders which the Spring Creek Twentieth Anniversary Celebration Project (2016) documented and made public.

The Phase I Plan is a sound foundation document. However, thirteen years have lapsed since the completion of this project. Economic development and population in the watershed has actually increased beyond forecast and is expected to continue. Financial and administrative support have been lacking to continue development of the Plan and provide systematic management of the watershed. With the hiring of Spring Creek Watershed Conservation Coordinator (Lexi Orr) by the Watershed Commission, a degree of administrative capacity has been restored and interest is building to move forward on the Watershed Plan.

The full plan can be downloaded as a .pdf at:

<http://www.springcreekwatershed.org/images/stories/pdf/ClearwaterSCWPlan.pdf>

Compiled by Bill Sharp, Chair, Spring Creek Watershed Association, February 6, 2017 and reviewed by core members of the Association.

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<sup>2</sup> A list of priorities was developed by the Watershed Commission at a public meeting in March 2004 (attached).