

## **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **General information about Big Sewickley Creek and watershed:**

The Big Sewickley Creek watershed encompasses approximately 30 square miles across parts of 12 municipalities in three counties. Link to Allegheny Land Trust watershed report:

<https://alleghenylandtrust.org/big-sewickley-creek-watershed/>

Economy Borough in Beaver County and Marshall Township in Allegheny County have the largest percentage of land area in the watershed, but the headwaters reach as far east as Bradford Woods and Cranberry. The main stem of the creek is the boundary between Allegheny and Beaver Counties and the creek ultimately empties into the Ohio River between Leetsdale and Ambridge.

The Big Sewickley Creek watershed is a treasured local natural resource for many reasons. Eight municipal parks, two sportsmen associations, several privately-protected conservation areas, and a 1,200-acre state gamelands lie within the watershed. Trails in the area host hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians, and fishing holes and stream habitat attract anglers of all ages during trout season. The watershed also contains critical habitat for plant and animal species in six Natural Heritage Areas.

### **Timeline:**

See PA DEP's website with information about PennEnergy Resources, LLC's permit application documents:

<https://www.dep.pa.gov/About/Regional/SouthwestRegion/Community%20Information/Pages/PennEnergy-Water-Management-Plan.aspx>

In July 2021, PennEnergy Resources, a shale gas drilling company, submitted WMP amended applications for proposed water withdrawals from Big Sewickley Creek and the North Fork Big of Big Sewickley for use in unconventional shale gas well development. They initially wanted to withdraw three million gallons per day from Big Sewickley Creek and then changed to two million gallons per day, and they also wanted to withdraw one million gallons per day from the North Fork of Big Sewickley Creek.

Economy Borough received initial notification about PennEnergy's plan to withdraw water from the creek in late June 2021, but none of the other 11 boroughs and townships in the watershed received any notice.

Residents requested to meet with DEP staff about the water withdrawal plan, and asked that a community forum be arranged so that those in the affected communities could have a public exchange of information with DEP staff before any decisions were made on the proposed plan. However, despite repeated requests, the DEP never agreed to meet with residents or have a community forum.

The local residents' campaign to save Big Sewickley Creek has been ongoing for more than two-and-a-half years. During that time, the Big Sewickley Creek Watershed Association (BSCWA) and other watershed advocacy groups wrote more than a dozen letters to the DEP and contacted the PA Fish and Boat Commission as well as their local state representatives. Community engineers, biologists, scientists, and other technical experts reviewed PennEnergy's permit application documents, and the letters sent to DEP addressed in detail what the BSCWA and residents believed to be deficiencies and errors in the proposed water management plan.

Residents also talked with people at the creek on the opening day of trout fishing season, and they gathered hundreds of signatures for petitions sent to DEP requesting that the agency deny the water withdrawal from the creek. One petition sent with a letter to the DEP in the spring of 2022 had more than 200 signatures, and another petition sent in April 2023 had almost 300 signatures.

During this time, the DEP issued multiple deficiency notices to PennEnergy related to inadequacies in their application documents, and PennEnergy submitted numerous amended Water Management Plan applications to the DEP. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission conducted a species impact review in August 2021 and issued their own comments and recommendations in four additional letters.

PennEnergy was also required to submit a Joint Permit Application (JPA) for the proposed water intake structure and for their proposed temporary above-ground waterline to transport the water from the creek to PennEnergy's B50 shale gas well pad in Economy Borough, Beaver County. The DEP issued additional deficiency notices related to the Joint Permit Application, and PennEnergy submitted two more revised Joint Permit Applications.

**The Ohio River is an available alternative water source:**

PennEnergy Resources already has a DEP-approved permit to withdraw five million gallons of water per day from the Ohio River. They also have a pipeline running from an Ohio River intake in Freedom to a central impoundment facility at Fritsch Farm in New Sewickley Township, Beaver County. <https://www.mckimcreed.com/portfolio-page/ohio-river-to-fritsch-farm-water-line/>

**PennEnergy Resources DEP violations for withdrawing water without an approved WMP:**

Seven DEP violations were issued to PennEnergy Resources in 2022 and 2023 for "failure to obtain an approved water management plan for withdrawing or using water during the drilling or hydraulic fracture stimulation of an unconventional well."

Violation IDs 962530, 7/5/22; 8167430 and 8167431, 11/22/23; 8167775 and 8167776, 12/8/23; 8167777 and 8167778, 12/8/2023

Examples: [eFACTS on the Web \(pa.gov\)](#), [eFACTS on the Web \(pa.gov\)](#)