Pennsylvania House Republican Policy Committee
Hearing to Discuss York County's Water Quality Monitoring Program

October 9, 2025

Written Testimony of York County President Commissioner Julie Wheeler

Good morning.

Thank you, Chairman Rowe and committee members for the invitation to testify today regarding York County's innovative Water Quality Monitoring Program.

This initiative is the result of an incredible amount of hard work, dedication and partnership between York County, the York County Planning Commission, the United States Geological Survey, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, the York County Farm Bureau, the York County Conservation District and many other stakeholders.

We started this work after the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection reported that York County was the second-highest contributor of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment to the Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay.

It was a claim that caught us all by surprise, and it gave York County a black eye.

We wanted to see the data behind DEP's reporting. It turns out, the report was developed using computer-based modeling. There was no real-time data from the source to back up the reporting from the state.

We decided computer modeling wasn't good enough. We needed to know the truth about our waterways, backed up by hard data.

So, in 2020 we partnered with the USGS to begin what is now a ten-year program to understand what's really happening with York County's waterways.

We are the first county in Pennsylvania and – in fact –the entire nation to undertake this kind of innovative water quality monitoring initiative.

Through this innovative partnership, we have been able to capture accurate data from six state-of-the-art water quality monitoring stations along the county's eastern boundary.

The monitoring stations capture data from Fishing Creek at Goldsboro and Craley, the Conewago Creek, Codorus Creek, Kreutz Creek and Muddy Creek. The stations capture data round-the-clock and year-round, providing an accurate real-time and long-term picture of the water quality at each station.

Today, I am pleased to share that York County's waterways are significantly cleaner than what had originally been reported by the state. In fact, in some cases, the data released by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection overstated our pollutant levels by exponentially greater levels than what we now know are the accurate levels from our monitoring stations.

We were so excited about the results that we decided to announce them to the public on Earth Day this year.

Our partnership with the USGS is now at its halfway point –providing critical real-time data that can now be used to help measure the county's ongoing progress at reducing pollutants into the waterways.

And perhaps more importantly, we can now use this data to develop targeted solutions in those areas of our watershed that have been identified to have higher pollutant levels.

Here in York County, we pride ourselves on the responsible stewardship of our precious land and waterways. That is why we have partnered with the USGS to develop this program.

Because thoughtful, effective decision-making requires us to have accurate information. Armed with better data, we can make better decisions for the benefit of the people of York County. And that's what we have through this initiative.

In York County, we are data-driven and solution-focused.

Our waterways are a precious resource, and we all have a shared responsibility to keep them clean.

Here in York County, we're proving once again that community, collaboration and innovation are the keys to success.

Thank you.