



Testimony to the
New Jersey Joint Legislative Task Force
on Drinking Water Infrastructure

November, 30, 2016

Contact:

[Chris Sturm](#), Managing Director, Policy and Water, New Jersey Future;
Member, Jersey Water Works backbone staff, 609-393-0008, x114
[Margaret Waldo](#), Program Director, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation;
Member, Jersey Water Works Steering Committee, (973) 540-8442, x117

Testimony from Chris Sturm

Thank you for inviting Jersey Water Works to testify today. I am Chris Sturm, managing director for policy and water at [New Jersey Future](#), which provides staff support to the [Jersey Water Works](#) collaborative. I am here with Margaret Waldo from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, who serves on the Jersey Water Works Steering Committee. Today I will describe the Jersey Water Works collaborative and what it is doing that is relevant to your mandate. Margaret will explain the holistic “One Water” approach, which is making a difference in Camden, and offer strategies to build political will for water investments.

Jersey Water Works and Its Drinking Water Priorities

As Governor Florio explained, Jersey Water Works is a statewide collaborative that promotes the transformation of drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure in sustainable, cost-effective ways that support economic growth, equitable communities and public-sector accountability.

Jersey Water Works uses a collaborative approach because it aspires to change a large and complex system that has many different actors. The collaborative engages members from all the perspectives with a stake in the system, and they become part of crafting solutions.

The makeup of its Steering Committee reflects that diversity, and includes many of the people testifying today: Daniel Van Abs from Rutgers University, Larry Levine from Natural Resources Defense Council (represented today by Joan Matthews), Peggy Gallos from the Association of

Environmental Authorities of New Jersey, and Andrew Hendry from the New Jersey Utilities Association. Other members who may testify in the future include Dan Kennedy, NJDEP's assistant commissioner for water resources, and David Zimmer, the executive director of the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust. Jersey Water Works continues to grow and form new partnerships, including with New Jersey American Water and the Plumbers and Pipefitters, who are sponsoring our conference on Friday. Next year, in partnership with some of the state's water trade associations we'll launch a new "One Water" award to recognize projects that provide holistic solutions. You can see a full list of Steering Committee members appended to our testimony, along with a list of the organizations representing our 260+ members.

The members of Jersey Water Works have adopted shared goals and sub-goals to focus the collaborative's work. (*See the attached handout.*) From those I would like to highlight three priorities of greatest interest to the task force:

1. Maintaining pipes through asset management
2. Ensuring affordable access to safe drinking water
3. Improving public accountability by sharing data about water infrastructure systems.

Our drinking water delivery systems – the pipes, pumps, and water towers we rely on every day – leak at an alarming rate and, as you've no doubt noticed from closed roads, emergency repairs and flooded streets, are prone to breaking. This drives up costs and threatens commerce and economic growth. Utilities can turn this around by creating and fully funding asset management programs that treat water systems as assets that are systematically assessed, prioritized and maintained.

Jersey Water Works members are working to improve pipe conditions through asset management. As one example, our Best Practice Committee is partnering with the Sustainable Jersey municipal certification program to provide clear guidance to local officials on how to conduct water loss audits and develop and implement asset management programs, and then share the results with the public. We will offer training on these areas, in partnership with Sustainable Jersey and the Association of Environmental Authorities of New Jersey, in January or February.

Some of the largest upgrades needed are in distressed municipalities where many residents live in poverty. Everyone in New Jersey should have access to affordable and safe drinking water and sewage treatment. Jersey Water Works is conducting research to assess the affordability of

water and sewer service in several New Jersey cities. We will discuss potential solutions to the affordability challenge at our conference on Friday, and will recommend ways to offer assistance to the neediest residents, perhaps similar to home heating assistance programs. This is an area that may require state legislation.

In addition, to help ensure that drinking water is not only affordable but also safe from lead, we have published on the Jersey Water Works website a [list of resources about lead](#) in drinking water.

Lastly, we must improve public accountability and transparency for what are enormous public expenditures, through sharing data about our drinking water, wastewater and stormwater systems. As management expert Peter Drucker has said, “What gets measured gets improved.” But the fact is that at the state level we don’t have good data on the state of our water infrastructure systems. Jersey Water Works’ new measurement system aspires to track progress annually on indicators for pipe condition, asset management and rate affordability, among others. Implementing the system will require a major effort of our members, from state regulators to local system operators. The result will be data that enables local and state leaders to know the extent to which our water infrastructure systems are improving. An illustrated handout describes the system and shows what we will measure to answer the question, “Are we making progress?”

Connecting with Jersey Water Works and its Resources

I’ll conclude my testimony with information on how you can connect with Jersey Water Works and take advantage of its resources. Please visit our website, www.jerseywaterworks.org, sign up for our monthly newsletter, and, to signal your support for the Jersey Water Works mission, please join the collaborative as a member. *See handout*. I also invite you to join us at our annual conference on Friday in Newark. *There is a postcard in your packet*. We’ll explore solutions from local, state and national thought leaders and practitioners, and we’ll unveil more than 30 commitments from our members to upgrade water infrastructure in 2017. Finally, feel free to contact me to discuss how Jersey Water Works can assist your efforts. Our committees will be establishing a 2017 work plan in January, and we would welcome your input.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue!

Testimony from Margaret Waldock

Introduction

You've heard from Governor Florio about the current condition of our state's drinking water infrastructure and the compelling vision for 21st-century water infrastructure in New Jersey as essential to a prosperous economy and a healthy future for our state. My colleague Chris Sturm introduced you to the work of Jersey Water Works, a vehicle for mobilizing diverse stakeholders towards shared goals related to improving water infrastructure statewide. I am here as a representative of the Steering Committee of Jersey Water Works, an honor I share with 20 other members – representatives from public agencies, private sector, non-profit organizations, academia, and utilities. The Steering Committee is charged with setting the strategic direction of the Jersey Water Works collaborative, monitoring its progress, identifying opportunities for action, and leveraging new resources.

I am also here as a representative of the philanthropic-sector participant in Jersey Water Works. For the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, our interest in this issue stems from our interest in healthy, sustainable communities in New Jersey. And we are not alone: There is growing interest and involvement on the part of private philanthropy across the country in advancing smart infrastructure investments that have triple-bottom-line benefits – social, environmental, and economic – for communities. Infrastructure connects to a multitude of philanthropic priorities, from public health and safety to climate-change resiliency, and funders nationwide are deploying their resources to support research, convening and community involvement in infrastructure improvements.

The Benefits of Integrated Water Management

What I've come to learn from this work (we've been supporting Jersey Water Works since 2013) is that the complexities that Governor Florio spoke of – a fragmented water supply and management system, aging infrastructure, increasing costs and strapped municipal/state budgets – demand a new approach, one that does not consider drinking water in isolation, but rather in the context of a broader water system that considers all water – stormwater, groundwater, surface water sources, even sewage – as a resource. And here we would be remiss if we didn't remind the task force that it has been more than 20 years since the last update to the state's Water Supply Master Plan, which addresses both water supply and infrastructure needs – both of which will be important if we are to adopt integrated water management. If we can shift our thinking and approach, we will produce the most cost-effective solutions for community health, sustainability and resiliency.

The good news is that utility directors and other water industry leaders nationally are advancing integrated water management solutions. We were fortunate to send a cohort of New Jersey delegates to a national conference last year at which we learned of One Water approaches happening across the country, from rural communities to cities, and of inspiring collaborations among organizations as diverse as utilities, community redevelopment organizations, the agriculture industry, conservation organizations, and state government. For example, we learned of initiatives that link upstream source-water protection with downstream community redevelopment that incorporates green infrastructure approaches to stormwater management – all in an effort to advance this One Water approach and to maximize the impact and value of investments

I say all of this to assure you that New Jersey is not alone. We have a lot to learn, but we can learn from the shared experiences of others.

And we don't even have to go far to find compelling examples. There are leaders right here in New Jersey whom we can elevate, learn from, and celebrate.

Lessons from the City of Camden

I'm speaking of people like Andy Kricun at the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority. Andy's organization serves some of the most economically distressed neighborhoods in the state. The City of Camden is at the end of the system, so to speak – the place where the watershed meets the river. It bears the brunt of increasing quantities of stormwater, generated both upstream and across the city, that overwhelm the city's combined storm/wastewater system, causing sewage to flood neighborhood streets during average rainfall events. Andy recognizes not only his obligation to provide basic wastewater treatment services to his customers, but also the opportunities that a One Water approach presents to mobilize community stakeholders in implementing and supporting integrated grey and green solutions that improve neighborhoods and waterways, create local job opportunities, reduce costs, and reinforce the value of infrastructure to people and businesses.

It's that last piece that is most compelling, because I've also come to appreciate that getting people excited about investing billions of dollars in what is largely invisible – pipes in the ground—is the most challenging part of this work. Whether its drinking water, sewage or stormwater, people don't think about it until there's an emergency.

Conclusion

This is why Jersey Water Works is consequential and important: Because the only way we are going to address the drinking water infrastructure needs of New Jersey communities in a cost-effective, successful way is to work in synchronicity to deal with water across the system – to protect its quality, conserve its quantity, and get more value from it, so we can meet all water-related needs across our entire ecosystem.

We also need to ensure that our time and money are spent wisely, benefits are distributed fairly and equitably, and transparency and accountability are hallmarks of the work.

We urge you to consider Jersey Water Works as a partner in your efforts, and look forward to assisting in advancing our mutual goals for the betterment of New Jersey communities.

On behalf of the Jersey Water Works collaborative, we thank you for your leadership on this issue and for inviting us to testify.

Attachments:

- JWW Palm Card
- JWW Steering Committee, Members' Organizations
- JWW Goals
- JWW Measurement System
- JWW Membership Form
- JWW Conference Information