

Governor Phil Murphy

Murphy Administration Launches Initiative to Support and Improve Trenton Water Works, Ensure Safe Drinking Water

10/12/2022

TRENTON – Following a months-long compliance evaluation of conditions affecting Trenton Water Works (TWW), Governor Phil Murphy, Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. LaTourette, and Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora today announced the launch of a new Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) initiative to better support and improve TWW. Through this initiative, the State will work with the City to enhance TWW's technical and managerial capacity with the goal of improving the operations and maintenance of TWW to ensure that the system reliably produces safe drinking water that meets all requirements of the New Jersey Safe Drinking Water Act.

Despite many recent efforts at the local level to improve operating conditions and advance long-overdue capital improvements at TWW, the system continues to struggle in maintaining compliance with regulatory obligations and requirements. To ensure that maintenance and operational needs crucial to the protection of public health are met, and that long-overdue capital improvements may receive the benefit of new and considerable state and federal funding, DEP has determined that a capacity-building program with direct operational oversight is necessary to ensure TWW's near- and long-term success in meeting the needs of the 200,000+ residents served by the system in Trenton, as well as portions of Ewing, Hamilton, Hopewell, and Lawrence.

"Since the outset of my Administration, the provision of clean, affordable drinking water and the promotion of healthy communities have remained among our foremost priorities," said **Governor Murphy**. "Protecting our children, families, and businesses is a responsibility that all levels of government share, and one that we must leverage every existing partnership to fulfill. Under the leadership of the DEP and in coordination with the City of Trenton, we will work tirelessly to safeguard our residents and return water system quality to the level our communities deserve."

"The health of the residents is of paramount importance and we want to see Trenton succeed at all levels of government," said **Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs**. "Ensuring public health and safety is a core principle of municipal services. The Division of Local Government Services, which has some fiscal oversight of the City, will assist DEP in any way it can to ensure TWW succeeds in providing safe drinking water for its residents."

"Clean and safe drinking water is a human right but delivering this public good is a far more complex undertaking than one might expect," said **Commissioner LaTourette**. "The depth of managerial, technical, and financial expertise required to ensure consistent operation, maintenance, and improvement of a water system is significant. Yet, not all systems are created equal, and we must invest more time, attention, and resources in those that need our help. Through direct operational oversight, DEP will help Trenton Water Works build the capacity necessary to better serve the public. Through this initiative, DEP and the City will more fully assess the system's needs, meet its challenges, and ensure its long-term success for the benefit of the people of Trenton and the surrounding communities that this system serves."

"We are committed to strengthening Trenton Water Works, improving its operations, advancing capital projects, and maintaining high water quality in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental," said **Mayor Gusciora**. "As we've dealt with City Council obstruction, we are resolute and determined in our efforts to build on the substantial progress we've made, fulfilling the promise I made to modernize the TWW system to ensure clean and safe drinking water for our customers and service-area residents for generations to come."

TWW draws water from the Delaware River to provide water to more than 200,000 people in Trenton, as well as portions of Ewing, Hamilton, Hopewell, and Lawrence. The system has intermittently struggled to fully maintain critical treatment processes, monitor water quality, employ adequately trained operating personnel, and invest in required maintenance and capital needs, including significant upgrades to aging infrastructure such as the seven-acre, open-air finished water reservoir that stores and provides already treated water to about 70 percent of TWW's distribution system. The initiative launched by the Murphy Administration today with the support of the City is intended to remedy these concerns.

This initiative, which will be implemented in accordance with an administrative order issued by DEP, has two primary phases that will be pursued concurrently: (1) immediate retention and deployment of a capacity-building force comprised of managerial and technical experts who will focus on improving routine operations and maintenance, as well as immediate capital needs; and (2) a full-scale assessment and preparation of organizational and operational recommendations.

To effect Phase 1, TWW will facilitate the direct oversight and monitoring of the system by DEP and its consultants, including a third-party adviser that will be embedded in the system for the purposes of monitoring and assessing all system operations and maintenance, adding necessary technical and managerial capacity to the system, and making technical, managerial, and financial recommendations necessary to bring the system into full compliance with applicable law.

To effect Phase 2, the third-party adviser will undertake a comprehensive technical, managerial, and financial capacity assessment of the system that will result in a report of organizational and operational recommendations, as well as short- and long-term asset management and capital improvement recommendations that will serve the basis of future action and investment.

DEP and the City will collaborate to ensure that the progress and outcomes of this initiative are open and transparent to the public.

As of October 12, 2022, water quality sample results submitted to DEP by TWW reflect that the water system meets applicable water quality standards. DEP will continue to closely monitor water quality parameters and other indicators of the status of the TWW system. If TWW exceeds a regulatory standard for drinking water quality, or if DEP otherwise determines that an acute risk to public health exists, the public notification would be issued to all TWW customers.

For more information about DEP's direct oversight of Trenton Water Works, visit <https://dep.nj.gov/trentonwater/> (<https://dep.nj.gov/trentonwater/>)

For information on DEP's regulation and oversight of drinking water systems in New Jersey, visit DEP's Division of Water Supply & Geoscience website at: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/> (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/>)

For information about water infrastructure investment opportunities provided by DEP, visit: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/wiip/> (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/wiip/>)

Governor Phil Murphy

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