

May 13, 2026

Concerned Commenter:

Thank you for contacting the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (Commission) to share your concerns regarding withdrawals from the existing Mt. Pleasant Wells 2, 5, 6, and 11 by the Hazleton City Authority (Authority).

The Commission is an independent water resource management agency created as a federal-interstate Compact commission with members from New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the Federal government. The Mission of the Commission, which is defined in the Compact, is to enhance public welfare through comprehensive planning, water supply allocation, and management of the water resources of the Susquehanna River Basin. To accomplish this Mission, the Commission works to reduce damages caused by floods; provide for the reasonable and sustained development and use of surface water and groundwater for municipal, agricultural, private supply, recreational, commercial, and industrial purposes; protect and restore fisheries, wetlands, and aquatic habitat; protect water quality and instream uses; and ensure future availability of flows to the Chesapeake Bay.

The Commission appreciates your concerns about the potential impacts of water withdrawals, and strives to ensure that groundwater withdrawals are sustainable and that other users and aquatic habitats are protected. The Commission appreciates the public participation for this project and has prepared this response to comments and questions that have been received to date. Commission staff is sending this correspondence to address not only your comments, but also comments provided by other concerned citizens. The comment period for this project closed on May 4, 2026, and all public comments have been reviewed and will be provided to our Commissioners prior to the Commission's June 4, 2026, business meeting. Below are the frequently asked questions and comments, as well as the Commission's response, additional information, and an update on the status of review of the applications.

1. We are concerned about the request to withdraw an additional 1.200 million gallons per day (mgd) of groundwater from the Mt. Pleasant area.

The four Mt. Pleasant wells are existing sources for the Authority's public water supply system and were in operation prior to July 13, 1978, which is the effective date of the Commission's groundwater withdrawal regulations. Commission review and approval of the withdrawals was not previously required. However, system changes triggered Commission review and approval of the withdrawals and the Authority was required to submit groundwater withdrawal applications. The applications were revised after submittal, reducing the total cumulative quantity to 1.020 mgd. Therefore, the applications do not request additional water, as historical operations

data demonstrates that withdrawals from the four wells have been as high as 1.060 mgd (30-day average). Although the cumulative quantities provided in the revised applications for the Mt. Pleasant wells total 1.020 mgd, staff expects to recommend to our Commissioners that the combined withdrawal from these wells be limited to 0.608 mgd (30-day average), which is consistent with the demonstrated groundwater availability considering a 1-in-10-year drought.

2. What studies have been done?

Applications undergo a rigorous, scientific review. Highly trained licensed geologists apply the latest science and technology to determine whether or not a water use will negatively impact the environment and/or other users.

Commission regulations required submittal of hydrogeologic evaluations to support the groundwater withdrawal applications. As part of the provided hydrogeologic studies, a professional geologist licensed in Pennsylvania completed 72-hour, constant-rate aquifer tests of each well and provided the results of the testing with the hydrogeologic evaluations for review by the Commission's licensed geologists. Staff reviewed the hydrogeologic evaluations to assess sustainability and potential impacts as a result of withdrawals from the Mt. Pleasant wells. Additionally, staff completed an ecological evaluation of the area to help identify and assess potential impacts to aquatic features, species, and habitat. Based on staff's review, significant adverse impacts to other users or the environment are not expected at the recommended rates.

The project also holds existing permits from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) Safe Drinking Water program for operation of withdrawals from these wells.

3. The Authority has not demonstrated a need for the requested water and we are concerned that the withdrawals will have an adverse effect on the aquifer that supplies our drinking water.

The hydrogeologic studies that have been completed do not indicate that the withdrawals will have an adverse impact on the aquifer. These wells have been in operation for decades and the applications do not request additional water for the public water supply system. Commission staff evaluates the applications and determines if the projected demand is justified and realistic for the proposed use. The Authority has been experiencing growth within its service area for several years and growth is expected to continue. Continued use of these wells is necessary to meet the ongoing demand of the public water supply system.

4. We want a study of the 30-mile Jeddo Mine Tunnel system.

The Commission completed a detailed hydrogeologic study entitled "Water Balance for the Jeddo Tunnel Basin, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania," Publication No. 208, dated August 1999 (<https://www.srbc.gov/our-work/reports-library/technical-reports/208-jeddo-tunnel/>). The purpose of the investigation was to complete a watershed assessment and abatement plan for the Little Nescopeck Creek; however, an additional purpose of the investigation was to collect data to enhance the understanding of the hydrologic budget related to the discharge. Figure 2 of the report

identified the boundaries of the 32.24-square-mile Jeddo Tunnel drainage subbasin area, which does not include the Mt. Pleasant area. Therefore, the Jeddo Tunnel is not expected to be hydrologically connected to withdrawals from Mt. Pleasant Wells 2, 5, 6, or 11.

5. Pumping water from the Mt. Pleasant wells will worsen contamination associated with acid mine drainage.

The Commission does not regulate water quality, as water quality is regulated by PADEP. However, the Commission does consider the potential for adverse impacts to water quality and will condition an approval, as needed, to avoid or mitigate water quality impacts that may occur as a result of the requested withdrawals. The Mt. Pleasant wells have been operating for decades and staff does not expect that the continued operation of the wells will cause additional contamination to enter the aquifer, as the wells are not installed directly in mine pools. Additionally, because these wells are for public water supply, they are subject to routine water quality sampling requirements of PADEP and their issued permit.

6. The Authority withdrawals cannot be approved because the local authorities have not approved a land development plan for a data center.

As previously stated, the four Mt. Pleasant wells have been in operation for decades and the applications are for providing water to an existing public water supply system. Nothing in these applications is related to a data center.

Although property use and zoning issues are common and understandable concerns for any community faced with new or expanding projects, the Commission does not have jurisdiction over these issues. The Commission's jurisdiction is limited directly to a project's withdrawal and use of water and the potential for water-related impacts.

7. Pumping water at the requested rates will increase the risk of subsidence in former mining locations.

Based on information reviewed by the Commission, the Mt. Pleasant wells are not installed directly in mine pools and have operated for decades; therefore, subsidence as a result of continued operation of the Mt. Pleasant wells at the recommended rates is not expected.

8. The Mt. Pleasant area is designated as an Environmental Justice Area (EJA) and the Commission has not established Hazle Township as an EJA.

The Commission does not establish or designate EJAs; however, Commission staff reviews and considers EJA designations developed by other agencies during review of applications. During review of the Mt. Pleasant well applications, Commission staff coordinated with PADEP, which identified the Mt. Pleasant area as an EJA. The Commission has a stringent public notification process to ensure effective opportunity for public comment during the review phase of applications submitted to the Commission. The Commission is committed to maintaining open meeting practices that provide similar public access to its processes and transparency with respect to its actions.

The Commission's application process requires projects to complete a notification process that includes a public notice published in a newspaper that circulates in the area of the project and notification letters to the municipality, county, county agency, and state agencies with jurisdiction in the area of the project. This groundwater project also included letters mailed to property owners within a one-quarter-mile radius of the well locations. Additionally, a summary of the application materials for pending projects and all approvals are available on the Commission's Water Application and Approval Viewer (WAAV) for public access at: <https://www.srbc.gov/waav>.

Applications requiring Commission action are subject to a public hearing, which is open to the public to provide verbal testimony on those projects. The public hearing for these applications was held on April 23, 2026.

Written comments regarding these applications were accepted through May 4, 2026. All written comments submitted to the Commission and a transcript of the testimony received at the public hearing will be provided to the Commissioners for consideration prior to making a final decision.

STATUS OF COMMISSION REVIEW

The Commission's technical review of the applications is ongoing. Following completion of the technical review, staff will prepare recommendations to be presented to the Commissioners for their consideration at a quarterly Commission business meeting, which is currently scheduled for June 4, 2026. Additional information on the business meeting is available at: <https://www.srbc.gov/about/meetings-events/>.

To monitor the status of the applications or view a summary of the application materials, you can visit: <https://www.srbc.gov/waav>. Additional information regarding the Commission and our process is also available on our website at: www.srbc.gov.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Commission at project_comments@srbc.gov.