

SRBC Hearing – Pennsylvania State Legislature
Pete Ramsey - Testimony
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Relationship between the SRBC and the Golf Industry.

Consumptive users are facilities that use 20,000 GPD based on a 30 day average. In the early 1990's the commission made a concerted effort to bring golf courses in as consumptive users. They were willing to work with facilities to bring them into compliance, but it was always made clear that the facilities really had no choice. The water at or under the facilities did not belong to the facility. Facilities were required to install meters, perform aquifer tests on wells, perform flow tests on surface withdrawals, calculate evaporation from ponds and permit irrigation systems. Applicants were given the option of a onetime fee of several thousand dollars or pay a usage fee of .14/1000 gallons, (now .33/1000). Facilities were grandfathered certain quantities for operations that predated regulations. For consumptive use it was 1971, groundwater 1978 and surface water 1995. Facilities were told consumptive users with approved dockets would be exempt from legal action and the commission would use the revenue from fees to build storage into the basin for those in compliance. The commission admitted several years ago and again in a recent meeting that this was never done.

Subsequently, consumptive users are required to monitor all sources, record meters, submit usage, print out the invoice and mail in a check at the end of every quarter. If records or payments are not received on time or have overages for any reason, the commission sends certified mail threatening civil penalties. Facilities are inspected annually by SRBC staff who want to see the records, inspect the meters and review the dockets. Now facilities are faced with re approval as their 25 year dockets expire. New dockets expire in just 15 years. Consumptive use application fees are \$3,000 - \$12,000, surface water withdrawals are \$5,000 - \$10,000, groundwater withdrawals are \$8,000 - \$16,000 (unless granted a waiver from testing, which costs \$5,000). To use myself as an example, since 1998, Range End Golf Course has spent \$23,000 on aquifer testing and \$28,000 in usage charges to SRBC. For re approval we will owe the commission \$23,600. If not granted a waiver from aquifer testing, a 72 hour pump test is upwards of \$30,000. Every facility with a docket has or is about to experience these charges. No two facilities or dockets are the same, but we are all subject to an all-encompassing fee structure. I know of facilities that experienced business interruption because of low flow issues, transfer of ownership, paying for evaporation and redundant charges off public sources.

Golf is no longer in its hay day. The bubble burst after 2007 with the economy, and has not recovered. Most facilities are struggling to realize a small net profit or struggling to continue operation at all. Against all odds, given the circumstances, in 2014 golf still accounted for a \$2.3 billion industry in Pennsylvania. That's over \$1 billion in the Susquehanna Basin alone, which is about 50% of the state. However, in this industry we do not have the opportunity to recover some of the costs associated with producing our product. We are not water suppliers or energy producers and certainly not as lucrative as natural gas. We are collectively the smallest group of consumptive users within the SRBC. We are also some of the most highly trained and motivated stewards of the environment within the basin. The carbon footprint of any golf facility in the state would sky rocket if it were subdivided and developed. We have been desperate for over 20 years for a voice of reason to step in on our behalf.