

**Testimony of  
Cathy Curran Myers, Deputy Secretary  
Office of Water Management  
Department of Environmental Protection  
On HB 1989 PA Flood Grant and Assistance Program  
Before the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee  
Scranton City Hall, Scranton, PA  
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Chairman Melio, Chairman Fairchild and members of the committee, I would first like to thank you for calling this hearing and providing an opportunity to discuss in detail some background information and facts relevant to the Pennsylvania's Flood Protection Program and the need for an additional funding source to address the type of assistance provided for through HB 1989. My name is Cathy Curran Myers and I am the Deputy Secretary for the Office of Water Management in the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and one of my responsibilities is oversight of DEP's Flood Protection Program.

Pennsylvania derives many advantages from its abundant water supply. At times, however, the volume of water can be overwhelming. Pennsylvania's mountainous terrain, more than 86,000 miles of rivers and streams, and excessive rainfall have the potential to create flooding anywhere in the state. Past flooding has cost the state billions of dollars worth of flood damage, making Pennsylvania one of the most flood-prone states in the country. Because of this long history of flooding, Pennsylvania has developed one of the most extensive flood protection programs in the nation. DEP manages the commonwealth's Flood Protection Program and is authorized to provide structural flood protection for Pennsylvania communities that request such protection, provided such an effort can be justified economically.

Flooding in Pennsylvania has been caused by a variety of weather events and conditions. A severe summer thunderstorm can cause dangerous flash flooding locally on small streams and may only occur in one watershed, while remnants of hurricanes can result in days of hard steady rainfall, devastating larger watersheds and large portions of the state. Pennsylvania also has flooded many times from a combination of heavy prolonged rainfall and snow melt. Sometimes this can lead to ice jams that have resulted in extensive flooding and monetary loss. No matter the cause of a flood, there is always one common denominator and that is heartache for Pennsylvania residents.

The severity of a flood problem can vary. Some flooding problems are relatively minor in nature and can be corrected or relieved by removing channel blockage or debris, stabilizing a severely eroded streambank, or replacing a damaged bridge or culvert. However, many times the flood problem is more severe resulting in millions of dollars in flood damages and possible loss of life. These high magnitude events are sometimes referred to as a 100-year flood. A 100-year flood does not mean it will only occur once in 100 years. It refers to a probability and means that such a flood has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any given year. Larger scale flood problems may require extensive engineering analysis that may lead to a combination of structural and non-structural solutions. Nonstructural flood damage reduction measures include floodproofing or

be available for grants for flood protection projects and other related projects. The money generated would be in addition to the current funding DEP receives to operate the existing flood protection program.

The Governor's fiscal year 2008-2009 budget proposal includes \$100 million over three years for flood protection including a significant increase in capital budget funding. The funding is for design and construction of new flood protection projects, repair or improvements to existing flood protection projects, and increasing the number of stream improvement projects and flood protection grants to protect local communities. Governor Rendell's proposal more than doubles the Flood Protection Projects line item from approximately \$2.8 million to \$5.8 million. It also includes an annual increase in capital funds that will provide \$91 million over three years—or triple the normal amount released—to design and construct major capital flood protection projects. This will increase significantly the number of projects constructed or repaired each year. The Governor's proposal includes a new funding source similar in concept to the funding mechanism in HB 1989 for the increased debt service required to triple the capital funds released for the next three years.

As I said earlier, flooding in Pennsylvania is a serious issue, costing the residents of this state billions of dollars in damage and much more in heartache. By providing more funding for flood control and repairs following serious floods, we can continue the process of reducing future damage and protecting those living within these flood prone areas. The concepts described in HB1989 set the stage for further discussions on how to directly assist communities with preventing flood-related damage. DEP looks forward to working with the sponsor of the bill and legislative leaders in accomplishing this goal.

We have a very successful flood protection program and with your support, we can continue to expand the program and better protect the residents of Pennsylvania. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. I will be glad to answer any questions at this time.