WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §22-12-2

§22-12-2. Legislative findings, public policy and purposes.

(a) The Legislature finds that:

(1) West Virginia has relatively pure groundwater resources which are abundant and readily available;

(2) Over fifty percent of West Virginia's overall population, and over ninety percent of the state's rural population, depend on groundwater for drinking water;

(3) A rural lifestyle has created a quality of life in many parts of West Virginia which is highly valued. Maintaining this lifestyle depends upon protecting groundwater to avoid increased expenses associated with providing treated drinking water supplies to rural households;

(4) West Virginia's groundwater resources are geologically complex, with the nature and vulnerability of groundwater aquifers and recharge areas not fully known;

(5) Contamination of groundwater is generally much more difficult and expensive to clean up than is the case with surface water;

(6) Groundwaters and surface waters can be highly interconnected. The quality of any given groundwater can have a significant impact on the quality of groundwaters and surface waters to which it is hydrologically connected;

(7) A diverse array of human activities can adversely impact groundwater, making it necessary to develop regulatory programs that utilize a variety of approaches;

(8) Various agencies of state government currently exercise regulatory control over activities which may impact on groundwater. Coordination and streamlining of the regulatory activities of these agencies is necessary to assure that the state's groundwater is maintained and protected through an appropriate groundwater protection program;

(9) Disruption of existing state regulatory programs should be avoided to the maximum extent practical;

(10) The maintenance and protection of the state's groundwater resources can be achieved consistent with the maintenance and expansion of employment opportunities, agriculture, and industrial development; and

(11) A state groundwater management program will provide economic, social, and environmental benefits for the citizens of West Virginia now and in the future.

WV Legislature

(b) Therefore, the Legislature establishes that it is the public policy of the State of West Virginia to maintain and protect the state's groundwater so as to support the present and future beneficial uses and further to maintain and protect groundwater at existing quality where the existing quality is better than that required to maintain and protect the present and future beneficial uses. Such existing quality shall be maintained and protected unless it is established that (1) the measures necessary to preserve existing quality are not technically feasible or economically practical and (2) a change in groundwater quality is justified based upon economic or societal objectives. Such a change shall maintain and protect groundwater quality so as to support the present and future beneficial uses of such groundwater.

(c) The purposes of this article are to:

(1) Maintain and protect the state's groundwater resources consistent with this article to protect the present and future beneficial uses of the groundwater;

(2) Provide for the establishment of a state groundwater management program which will:

(i) Define the roles of agencies of the state and political subdivisions with respect to the maintenance and protection of groundwater, and designate a lead agency for groundwater management;

(ii) Designate a state agency responsible for establishment of groundwater quality standards;

(iii) Provide for the establishment of standards of purity and quality for all groundwater;

(iv) Provide for the establishment of groundwater protection programs consistent with this article;

(v) Establish groundwater protection and groundwater remediation funds;

(vi) Provide for the mapping and analysis of the state's groundwater resources and coordination of the agencies involved; and

(vii) Provide for public education on groundwater resources and methods for preventing contamination;

(3) Provide such enforcement and compliance mechanisms as will assure the implementation of the state's groundwater management program; and

(4) Assure that actions taken to implement this article are consistent with the policies set forth in section two, article eleven of this chapter.

WV Legislature