WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §22-26-3

§22-26-3. Waters claimed by state; water resources protection survey; registration requirements; agency cooperation; information gathering.

(a) The waters of the State of West Virginia are claimed as valuable public natural resources held by the state for the use and benefit of its citizens. The state shall manage and protect its waters effectively for present and future use and enjoyment and for the protection of the environment. Therefore, it is necessary for the state to determine the nature and extent of its water resources, the quantity of water being withdrawn or otherwise used and the nature of the withdrawals or other uses: Provided, That no provisions of this article may be construed to amend or limit any other rights and remedies created by statute or common law in existence on the date of the enactment of this article.

(b) The secretary shall conduct an ongoing water resources survey of consumptive and nonconsumptive surface water and groundwater withdrawals by large-quantity users in this state. The secretary shall determine the form and format of the information submitted, including the use of electronic submissions. The secretary shall establish and maintain a statewide registration program to monitor large-quantity users of water resources.

(c) Large-quantity users, except those who purchase water from a public or private water utility or other service that is reporting its total withdrawal, shall register with the department and provide all requested survey information regarding withdrawals of the water resources. Multiple withdrawals from state water resources that are made or controlled by a single person and used at one facility or location shall be considered a single withdrawal of water. Water withdrawals for self-supplied farm use and private households will be estimated. Water utilities regulated by the Public Service Commission pursuant to article two, chapter twenty-four of this code are exempted from providing information on interbasin transfers to the extent those transfers are necessary to provide water utility services within the state.

(d) Except as provided in subsection (f) of this section, large-quantity users who withdraw water from a West Virginia water resource shall comply with the survey and registration requirements of this article. Registration shall be maintained annually by every large-quantity user on forms and in a manner prescribed by the secretary.

(e) The secretary shall maintain a listing of all large- quantity users and each user's baseline average water withdrawal.

(f) The secretary shall make a good faith effort to obtain survey and registration information from persons who are withdrawing water from in-state water resources, but who are located outside the state borders.

(g) All state agencies and local governmental entities that have a regulatory, research,

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planning or other function relating to water resources, including, but not limited to, the State Geological and Economic Survey, the Division of Natural Resources, the Public Service Commission, the Bureau for Public Health, the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Marshall University, West Virginia University and regional, county and municipal planning authorities may enter into interagency agreements with the secretary and shall cooperate by: (i) Providing information relating to the water resources of the state; (ii) providing any necessary assistance to the secretary in effectuating the purposes of this article; and (iii) assisting in the development of a state water resources management plan. The secretary shall determine the form and format of the information submitted by these agencies.

(h) Persons required to participate in the survey and registration shall provide any reasonably available information on stream flow conditions that impact withdrawal rates.

(i) Persons required to participate in the survey and registration shall provide the most accurate information available on water withdrawal during seasonal conditions and future potential maximum withdrawals or other information that the secretary determines is necessary for the completion of the survey or registration: Provided, That a coal-fired electric generating facility shall also report the nominal design capacity of the facility, which is the quantity of water withdrawn by the facility's intake pumps necessary to operate the facility during a calendar day.

(j) The secretary shall, to the extent reliable water withdrawal data is reasonably available from sources other than persons required to provide data and participate in the survey and registration, utilize that data to fulfill the requirements of this section. If the data is not reasonably available to the secretary, persons required to participate in the survey and registration are required to provide the data. Altering locations of intakes and discharge points that result in an impact to the withdrawal of the water resources shall also be reported.

(k) The secretary shall report annually to the Joint Legislative Oversight Commission on State Water Resources on the survey results. The secretary shall also make a progress report annually on the implementation of the State Water Resources Management Plan and any significant changes that may have occurred since the State Water Resources Management Plan was submitted in 2013.

(l) In addition to any requirements for completion of the survey established by the secretary, the survey must accurately reflect both actual and maximum potential water withdrawal. Actual withdrawal shall be established through metering, measuring or alternative accepted scientific methods to obtain a reasonable estimate or indirect calculation of actual use.

(m) The secretary shall make recommendations to the Joint Legislative Oversight Commission on Water Resources created in section five of this article relating to the implementation of a water quantity management strategy for the state or regions of the state where the quantity of water resources are found to be currently stressed or likely to be

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stressed due to emerging beneficial or other uses, ecological conditions or other factors requiring the development of a strategy for management of these water resources.

(n) The secretary may propose rules pursuant to article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code as necessary to implement the survey registration or plan requirements of this article.

(o) The secretary is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with local, state and federal agencies and private policy or research groups to obtain federal matching funds, conduct research and analyze survey and registration data and other agreements as may be necessary to carry out his or her duties under this article.

(p) The department, the Division of Natural Resources, the Division of Highways and the Conservation Agency (cooperating state agencies) shall continue providing matching funds for the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) stream-gauging network to the maximum extent practicable. Should a cooperating state agency become unable to maintain its contribution level, it should notify the USGS and the commission of its inability to continue funding for the subsequent federal fiscal year by July 1 in order to allow for the possible identification of alternative funding resources.

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