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This paper will document past, current, and future Levee Safety efforts in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The focus of this paper will include the history of levee safety in Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth’s current policies, and potential efforts, opportunities, and challenges with regards to the implementation of the National Levee Safety Program, in which Pennsylvania’s program was chosen as a pilot. As the pilot program is currently underway, this paper will serve as an update to a similar paper than will be present at the USSD conference in April 2017.

Flood protection has been considered a high priority in the Commonwealth since the Pennsylvania Flood Control Law, signed August 7, 1936, authorized the design and construction of flood protection projects. Since then, as part of this program, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) has constructed 52 distinct levee systems. While operation and maintenance of these levees is the responsibility of a local sponsor municipality, PA DEP has continuing involvement throughout the life of the levee. Their duties include annual inspections of each levee and serving as the liaison with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding federal assistance for the levees, notably with damage assessments and rehabilitation assistance under the PL84/99 Program, among others. As the National Levee Safety Program gets underway, Pennsylvania’s current activities put it at a unique advantage as far as implementation of the program. This paper will discuss some of those advantages and the expectation for implementation.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is one of the most flood-prone states in the nation. Since the Pennsylvania Flood Control Act of 1936, PA DEP has constructed more than 200 flood protection projects throughout the state at a cost of more than $800 million when translated to today’s dollars. Of these 200 projects, 52 of them include distinct levee systems. Proper operation and maintenance of these projects is overseen by the Division of Project Inspection within PA DEP’s Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands.