



ICE Detention Center Proposed In Schuylkill County, PA Poses Serious and Irreversible Environmental Harm

On January 15, 2026, ICE purchased a warehouse facility located at 50 Rausch Creek Rd, in Tremont, Schuylkill County, PA. The warehouse was purchased for \$119,515,000. The facility is in the Rausch Creek watershed, which is part of the Susquehanna River watershed. ICE intends to incarcerate up to 7,500 people at this location as part of its system of mass deportations as laid out in the ICE Reengineering Initiative. In addition to those incarcerated at the facility, employees will be needed to run the operations.

ICE asserts the detention center will be active and operating by November 30, 2026.

On March 5, 2026, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection issued Administrative Orders to DHS and ICE, to the Township and to the Schuylkill County Municipal Authority. The PADEP Administrative Orders clearly identify legal obligations, limitations and prohibitions regarding drinking water and sewage treatment as related to the proposed ICE detention facilities. The Administrative Orders prevent ICE from operating the warehouse facility as a detention center as proposed, unless and until they fulfill a series of clearly articulated legal requirements.

The Administrative Orders also clearly identify the many ways that the ICE plans to house such a high volume of detainees will overwhelm the drinking and wastewater systems needed to serve the surrounding community and could result in a series of environmental and community harms.

Stress On The Water Supply

The Schuylkill County Municipal Authority (SCMA) supplies both public water and sewage services to Tremont Borough, Tremont Township and Frailey Township, all 3 in Schuylkill County. The proposed facility is within the SCMA service area.

According to PADEP design standards, to support peak daily demand requirements for 7,500 detainees, the center would require 900,000 gallons per day (gpd) of water. This figure far surpasses the 400,000 gpd the SCMA Public Water System is designed to treat, and amounts to 90% of the system's water storage tank.

Further, the SCMA has already had to haul in bulk water to meet community water needs, particularly during drought conditions. The water system as currently permitted cannot provide adequate water supplies to the proposed detention center while also serving its current customers.

As described by PA Governor Josh Shapiro in a February 12, 2026 letter written to DHS, the community of Tremont's existing water supply is "under extreme stress" and "depend[s] on emergency water supplies, brought in on tanker trucks, to provide the water local residents need to drink, to shower, and for other necessities of daily life."

Strained Sewage Management

The Tremont Wastewater Treatment Plant discharges to the Swatara Creek, in the Susquehanna River Basin. Currently, SCMA is authorized to treat 500,000 gpd of wastewater at the plant. The Tremont Township Sewage Facilities Plan specifically approved up to 15,000 gpd of sewage flow from the Tremont Business Park where the warehouse is located.

According to PADEP, incarcerating 7,500 people at the warehouse "would likely produce 450,000 to 1,000,000 gallons per day of sewage." This volume far exceeds the 15,000 gallons of sewage per day approved in Tremont Township Sewage Facilities Plan. Further, overloading the treatment plant "will result in the uncontrolled discharge of untreated or inadequately treated sewage to Swatara Creek [], in violation of SCMA's NPDES permit, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Streams Law."

Permitting & Approvals Needed

- To provide the hundreds of thousands of additional gpd of water the facility would require, SCMA would have to substantially modify the public water system. This requires approval and permitting from PADEP.
- If ICE sought to construct or operate a new public water system at the warehouse site, or to secure bulk water hauling to the site to fulfill its water needs, it would have to first obtain a permit from PADEP.
- ICE must obtain a permit from PADEP indicating that the site and the plans and specifications of the warehouse sewage system are in compliance prior to discharging any sewage from the facility.

PADEP also directed the Township to not issue any permits or approvals to the warehouse, and to not provide water to or accept sewage from the warehouse without the required PADEP approvals.

Legal Response to PADEP Orders

March 17, 2026, ICE wrote PADEP urging it to relax, modify, circumvent, extend, suspend or otherwise alter or weaken the provided mandates in the Administrative Orders and in Pennsylvania State Law as they pertain to the Tremont Township detention facility proposal and another facility proposed in Upper Bern Township.

On March 24, 2026, PADEP responded to ICE, identifying the many reasons why the March 17 requests were inappropriate and otherwise not in compliance with law, and why PADEP would not be granting those requests.

On April 8, 2026, DHS appealed the two administrative orders with the Pennsylvania Environmental Hearing Board (EHB). The DHS ICE appeal asserts, among other things, that the Administrative Orders "unreasonably interfere with and encroach upon a federal law enforcement agency's ability to fulfill its responsibilities of enforcing the nation's immigration laws."

On April 17, 2026, Green Amendments For The Generations filed a petition with the Environmental Hearing Board requesting it be allowed to intervene in the legal action. If the petition is granted, the organization will become party to the case as Intervenor, with the opportunity to fully participate in the legal proceedings.