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Harrisburg, PA 17105-8555

December 18, 1998

Bureau of Watershed Conservation

717-772-4048

Dear Public Water Supplier:

On Wednesday, December 16, Governor Ridge declared a drought "emergency" in twelve counties, including: Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Jefferson, Lycoming, Snyder, and Somerset. This followed the Department of Environmental Protection's declaration on his behalf, on Tuesday, of a drought "warning" in all counties of the Commonwealth, except Washington, Westmoreland and Beaver, which remain in drought "watch." As a public water supplier, you should be taking actions commensurate with the status of the county in which your service area and/or sources are located.

Drought Watch

Drought "watch" indicates that conditions are developing such that a water shortage could occur in the future. Under these conditions, you should be calling upon your customers to voluntarily cut back water use, with a goal of achieving a 5% reduction in demands on your system. Customers should be requested to voluntarily curtail nonessential water uses such as lawn and garden watering, washing of vehicles or paved surfaces, etc. Indoor uses can be reduced by such measures as washing only full loads of laundry or dishes, or by washing dishes by hand, taking shorter showers, flushing toilets only when necessary, not running water while brushing teeth, and keeping a container of water in the refrigerator rather than running the tap to get cold water.

You should be accelerating your own conservation measures, such as leak detection and repair, or meter testing and calibration. Fire hydrant flushing should be undertaken only if necessary. You should be developing a drought contingency plan, or updating your existing one. Contact the Division of Water Use Planning at 717-772-4048, if you need assistance with your contingency plan.

You should begin to monitor your sources more closely in order to detect early any possible developing supply problems, and you should notify the Water Supply Program staff in the Department's regional office as soon as you recognize a developing problem. This will enable them to better serve you should you need assistance or approval for emergency sources later. A list of regional contacts is enclosed for your use.

Drought Warning

Drought "warning" indicates that potential water shortages are imminent. The objective of a warning response is to achieve a 10-15% reduction in system demand through an enhanced request for concerted voluntary conservation measures, in order to avoid or reduce shortages, relieve stressed sources and if possible forestall the need for mandatory water use restrictions.

In a warning, you should again step up your monitoring of conditions in your system, continue an accelerated leakage/loss control program and make every effort to keep your customers alert to the pending problem. Again, you should notify the Department's regional office as early as possible regarding developing problems and keep them informed on a regular basis of the status of your system as problems do develop. You should be following your drought contingency plan carefully in order to minimize future problems.

Drought Emergency

Drought "emergency" indicates that water shortages exist. Public health and safety may be at risk. The Governor's emergency proclamation assigns certain responsibilities to water purveyors, and it also provides administrative measures to assist you in drought response.

All citizens in the emergency area are subject to a mandatory ban on nonessential water use, as outlined in the proclamation and described in 4 Pa. Code Chapter 119. Copies of both are enclosed. These bans are enforceable by state and local police, under emergency authority. Because many of these uses are seasonal outdoor use, enforcement may not be a significant problem at this time of year, but you should talk to your local police, who will be notified to enforce this water use ban. You can assist them by acting as their agents when you observe violations of the ban. The authority for enforcement of these regulations is contained in the Emergency Management Services Code (35 Pa. C.S. §7101 et. seq., Act 323 of November 26, 1978, P.L. 1332) and the Governor's proclamation. The penalties for violation of these regulations are contained in 35 Pa. C.S. §7707, a copy of which is enclosed for your reference.

The county commissioners in each of the emergency-designated counties will be establishing a drought management task force within their counties. These task forces will coordinate, monitor and manage all drought reporting and response activities and water conservation measures undertaken within their counties, as necessary to ensure the provision of safe and reliable drinking water supplies. Public water supply agencies within those counties should keep the county drought management task force apprised of conditions and developing problems. The task force is your direct link to the county and state emergency management resources.

The Governor's proclamation requires all public water supply agencies within the designated emergency area to develop a drought contingency plan within 30 days. The

Department is requiring that all systems serving more than 100 service connections submit contingency plans to the Department by January 15, if you do not have a plan that has already been approved by the Department. If your plan has already been approved, you should update it as necessary to reflect changes in your sources or significant changes in your system demands. Updated plans should also be submitted to the Department by January 15. If no updates are necessary, you need not submit your plan. Plans should be addressed to the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator at the Bureau's address listed on this letterhead.

Governor Ridge declared a drought emergency at this time on the basis of deteriorating hydrologic conditions, which are monitored under the State's drought contingency plan. Throughout the affected area, precipitation, streamflow, groundwater levels and soil moisture levels are substantially below normal. Accumulated precipitation deficiencies range as high as 11 inches in the affected counties. Stream flows throughout much of the Commonwealth are nearing all-time monthly low values. Ground water levels in about a third of our monitoring wells are at emergency levels. The potential for extreme water shortages in the coming two months is heightened because any precipitation we do receive could come as snow and remain on the ground until the spring thaw, particularly in the mountainous areas,

where the emergency counties are located. A particularly cold winter could result in substantial ice formation on water supply reservoirs in these areas as well, thus reducing usable storage until the spring thaw.

Rationing Plans

You are urged to monitor your supplies closely and to follow your contingency plans rigorously. Should it become necessary for you to ration water to your customers, the Governor's proclamation provides the authority for such actions. The procedures for preparing and implementing a rationing plan are contained in 4 Pa. Code Chapter 120, which is also enclosed. Please contact the Division of Water Use Planning at 717-772-4048 for assistance in preparing your rationing plan. Your plan must be submitted to your county emergency management agency, who will forward it to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and to the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator for review. It must be approved by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Council prior to implementation.

All withdrawals for public water supply, regardless of the condition of the system, have the potential to impact stream flows and groundwater recharge, either directly or indirectly. Heavy usage within your system may impact your ability to provide adequate fire protection. At this time, we must all be cognizant of the need to protect public health and safety, both now and in the coming months, should these drought conditions persist. We must all do our utmost to avoid the need to close businesses or affect commerce due to depleted water supplies. Preserving employment and income must remain among our priority objectives. Elimination of non-essential water uses at this time will help secure your resources for essential uses later.

Drought Updates

The Department will use our website to help keep you informed on drought conditions, forms and instructions, procedures, regulations, a model-rationing plan, and the latest developments. We will also post daily drought updates. Please refer to our website for the most recent drought information. You can find it at <http://www.dep.state.pa.us> (choose "Drought"). You can send information to the Drought Coordinator by E-mail at droughtinfo@state.pa.us. You can also receive drought-related information from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency website at <http://www.pema.state.pa.us>.

If you have any questions, or need assistance, please feel free to contact the Division of Water Use Planning at 717-772-4048.

Sincerely,

Stuart I. Gansell

Director

Bureau of Watershed Conservation

Water Supplier December 18, 1998