

DRBC Reduces River Flow Target at Trenton

WEST TRENTON, N.J., July 23-- The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) and New York City have agreed to temporarily modify the Delaware River flow target at Trenton, N.J. from 3,000 to 2,700 cubic feet per second (cfs) in an effort to conserve dwindling water supplies.

"This temporary action is intended to preserve storage in the Beltzville and Blue Marsh reservoirs for later use if the current dry weather continues," DRBC Executive Director Carol R. Collier said. "The DRBC commissioners and New York City decided that it was in the public's best interest to preserve storage in these lower basin reservoirs to the maximum possible extent."

Due to unusually low flows in the Delaware River, the largest supplemental releases in the last 10 years were being made to support the Trenton flow target of 3,000 cfs. The DRBC has been directing up to 300 cfs of supplemental releases from three, large reservoirs owned by New York City that are located in the Delaware River's headwaters in New York State. Prior to the July 21 decision modifying the Trenton target, the DRBC also was directing releases of 150 to 300 cfs from the two lower basin reservoirs. The lower 2,700 cfs Trenton target avoids these lower basin releases at the present time.

"This decision will save precious water now being stored in the lower basin reservoirs while the "salt line" is not a major problem and buy us a little time in the hope that the area will get desperately-needed rainfall," Collier said.

"While the commission is taking this action to conserve water storage in the reservoirs, it is important that everyone - whether you are 5, 40 or 80 years old -- avoids wasteful water practices," Collier added. "We all need to make water conservation a lifelong habit."

The commission's drought plan focuses on salinity intrusion, or the upstream migration of salty water from the Delaware Bay during low-flow conditions in basin rivers and streams. As salt-laced water moves upriver, it increases corrosion control costs for surface water users and can raise the treatment costs for public water suppliers. The "salt line" is now at River Mile 83 in the vicinity of Chester, Pa., 11 miles upstream from the normal location for this time of the year.

The Blue Marsh Reservoir is located along the Schuylkill River in Berks County, Pa. and the Beltzville Reservoir is located along the Lehigh River in Carbon County, Pa.

The DRBC commissioners and a New York City representative unanimously agreed to the Trenton flow target modification in a conference call on July 21. The commissioners intend to formally approve and ratify this action at their next regularly scheduled meeting on Aug. 18.

The DRBC was formed in 1961 by compact among the four basin states (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Delaware) and the federal government. Commission programs include water quality protection, watershed planning, water supply allocation, regulatory review, water conservation initiatives, drought management, flood control and recreation.

For more information, including water conservation ideas, visit the DRBC Website at <http://www.state.nj.us/drbc/> .

SOURCE Delaware River Basin Commission Web Site: <http://www.state.nj.us/drbc/>

