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December 5, 2001

**Bureau of Watershed Management
Office of Commonwealth Drought Coordinator**

717-772-4048

- - - DROUGHT WATCH and WARNING EXPANDED - - -

Dear Public Water Supplier:

We are writing to inform you about the drought watch and warning declarations, which Secretary Hess announced on Monday, December 3 on behalf of Governor Mark Schweiker. These declarations expand the drought watches announced on August 8 and 23 and November 6 by adding the following 7 counties: Fayette, Greene, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Somerset, Susquehanna, and Wyoming. The following 22 counties, previously in watch, are now revised to a warning: Bedford, Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Columbia, Delaware, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lehigh, Mifflin, Monroe, Montgomery, Montour, Northampton, Northumberland, Philadelphia, Pike, Schuylkill, Snyder, Union, and Wayne.

The expansion of the watch area in the southwest and southeast reflects the effects of recent precipitation deficits. The expansion of the warning area is in response to both long-term and acute short-term precipitation deficits and declining stream flows and ground water levels, particularly at a time of year when both surface and ground water should be showing signs of recovery. In the Delaware River Basin, the warning expansion is in combination with the recent descent of the New York City Delaware Basin reservoir system into the drought emergency zone. Delaware Basin drought operations are guided by local and regional conditions in the basin as well as by storage in the reservoir system. The warning declaration affects counties throughout the Delaware Basin as well as in the Juniata and central Susquehanna Basins.

Both October and November delivered precipitation well below normal in all but the northwestern part of the state, with 60-day deficits ranging from about 2 inches in the southwest to over 3 inches in the northeast and over 5 inches in the southeast. Throughout the warning area particularly, these deficits added to long-term deficits that have generally been accumulating since the fall of 2000.

Please review your drought contingency plan and update your plan if necessary to account for any changes in either your sources or the demands on your system. If you do not have a drought contingency plan, you should be preparing one. If you are preparing one for the first time, we have information available to help you, and we can provide technical assistance. Call our Division of Water Use Planning at the number above if you need assistance. After you have completed your plan, you should submit it to us for review and approval.

We encourage you to use the Drought Information Center on our web site at <http://www.dep.state.pa.us> (choose Drought Information Center). We post drought updates on that site on a regular basis to keep you informed of emerging conditions. That site also either provides or links to information that is useful for monitoring conditions in your area or for educating your customers in various methods of conserving water. If you have a web site, you may wish to consider linking directly to our site, so your customers will have ready access to our information as well.

Remember, in a drought watch, we should all be seeking to reduce water use by about 5 percent through voluntary conservation measures. During a warning, our goal is 10-15 percent reductions, still through voluntary measures. Under a gubernatorial emergency proclamation, bans on nonessential water uses become mandatory, and water rationing may also be employed if necessary, with the approval of the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator,

as agent of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Council. Prudent use of our resources now can help to prevent, or at least delay, the need for emergency measures later.

If you have any questions, or we can be of assistance to you in any way, please feel free to contact our Division of Water Use Planning at the telephone number listed above.

Sincerely,

Stuart I. Gansell
Director
Bureau of Watershed Management and
Commonwealth Drought Coordinator