

Watershed MANAGEMENT



Drought Information Center

January 6, 1999

Following a public hearing yesterday, the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) voted to declare a state of water supply emergency in the basin, to be effective when storage in the New York City Delaware Basin reservoirs declines into the drought zone and remains in that zone for five consecutive days. It is now anticipated that the drought line on the storage curves will be penetrated on or about January 20, which would then make the emergency declaration effective on January 25.

While the Commission was deliberating the fate of the Delaware Basin, the Commonwealth spent a day under mostly clear skies and received no precipitation.

Streamflows in the upper Delaware Basin are generally declining again after the effects of the weekend's precipitation. Lehigh flows are declining rapidly and are well below normal. Schuylkill and lower Delaware River tributary flows are also declining very rapidly.

Streamflows in the upper West Branch Susquehanna River are declining, while tributary and mainstem flows in the middle and lower West Branch are generally up from yesterday, still reflecting runoff from the weekend precipitation. Flows in the upper main stem Susquehanna River continue declining. Juniata River basin flows are generally holding steady. Flows in the lower Susquehanna River tributary streams are declining fairly rapidly.

Flows in the upper Allegheny River basin are mixed, depending upon runoff times from the weekend precipitation; while flows in the lower basin are increasing, showing the effects of that runoff. Monongahela River tributary flows are also showing mixed effects from the weekend precipitation, depending upon runoff times. Beaver River tributary flows are generally declining.

Streamflows remain well below normal throughout the state.

Groundwater levels in the Delaware Basin continue to be on the rise, as a result of the weekend precipitation, but are showing signs of topping out and will probably be declining again by tomorrow. Monitoring wells in the Susquehanna and Ohio River basins continue to decline.

Two-day forecasts show the possibility of about 0.1 inch of snow or freezing rain in the southeast, increasing to 0.2-0.5 inches in the northwest.

While the weekend precipitation provided relief to some water supply systems, particularly those with

storage capacity to capture the runoff, the drought remains serious. Until sufficient precipitation occurs to enable full recovery from the long-term water supply deficits, conservation measures must continue be practiced. Counties which have been declared in emergency status by the Governor's December 16 proclamation remain so; emergency regulations (including nonessential water use bans) remain in effect for all residents of those counties, regardless of possible improvements which may have been realized by individual water supply systems.