

Watershed MANAGEMENT



Drought Information Center

June 21, 1999

On Friday, the Department downgraded the status of 12 southwestern counties from drought "watch" to drought "warning", bringing to 59 the total number of counties now in warning status. The 12 new counties include Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Clarion, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties.

The past week brought significant rainfall to the Susquehanna and Delaware River basin areas, but little relief in the Ohio basin. While totals were generally less than a half inch west of the Allegheny divide, the Susquehanna basin received in excess of an inch generally, and as high as 2 inches in the central part of the basin. In the Delaware basin, totals ranged from about a half inch in the southern counties to 1-1.5 inches in the northern areas.

Stream flow and ground water data is only available through Saturday, except at the main stem Delaware River gages.

In the Delaware River basin, flows on the main stem this morning are little changed from last Monday, despite the week's rain. Trenton flows are up from 3310 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 3380 cfs. The Lackawaxen River at Hawley was up from 83 to 113 cfs on Saturday, the Lehigh River at Bethlehem was down from 1140 to 950 cfs, and the Schuylkill River at Philadelphia was up marginally from 705 to 785 cfs. In the Christina River basin, Brandywine Creek at Chadds Ford declined from 198 to 173 cfs.

In the Susquehanna River basin, where rainfall was heaviest, flows were up only modestly. The main stem at Harrisburg increased from 5740 to 6540, still hovering close to the record low of 6180 cfs. The Lackawanna River at Old Forge increased from 105 to 127cfs. The West Branch at Lewisburg was up from 1510 to 1830, only 250 cfs above its record low of 1580. The Juniata River at Newport increased from 925 to 1270 cfs, and in the lower basin, the Conestoga River at Conestoga nearly doubled from 160 to 312 cfs. Basinwide, stream flows remain well below normal, although not below record lows as we had been seeing.

In the Ohio River basin, flows in the main stem Allegheny River were mixed, showing declines in the upper reaches and increases in the lower reaches as the week's runoff progressed downstream. Natrona flows were up from 3460 to 3520 cfs, compared against the record low of 3100. The Kiskiminetas River at Vandergrift decreased from 548 to 530 cfs. The Monongahela River at Braddock declined sharply from 2080 to 1570, well under its record low of 1750 cfs; while the Beaver River at Beaver Falls improved from 690 to 863 cfs, but only slightly above its record low of 810. The Ohio River at Sewickley rose marginally from 5720 to 6090 cfs.

Saturday's ground water data indicated that little of the precipitation penetrated through the soil mantle, as may have been expected. Ground water levels declined at all daily monitoring sites except Franklin and Lebanon Counties, but held even in Pike, Schuylkill and Snyder Counties.

The outlook is not encouraging. The coming five days are to bring very little precipitation, in the form of drizzle or light showers today, with nothing for the rest of the week. The 6-10 day outlook predicts only 0.5-1.0 inch of rain statewide. With that outlook, June should definitely finish as a deficit month for precipitation. All counties are currently recording deficits, ranging from 0.2 inch in the lower Susquehanna basin to as high as 2.3 inches in parts of the Ohio basin.